59854

A DEFENCE OF *Revealed Religion.* IN Six SERMONS Upon Rom. I. 16.

Wherein it is clearly and plainly ſhown, That no Man can poſſibly have any real Ground or Reaſon to be aſhamed of Chriſtianity.

By *HENRY HALLYWELL*, Maſter of Arts, and Vicar of *Cowfold* in *Suſſex.*

LONDON,
Printed for *Walter Kettilby*, at the *Biſhop's-Head* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard. 1694.

Imprimatur.

Decemb. 23.
1693.

Ra. Barker.

To the Moſt Reverend
Father in GOD,

JOHN,

Lord Archbiſhop of *YORK*,

AND

Metropolitan of *England*.

May it pleaſe Your Grace

TO *permit theſe Sermons to go under the Protection of Your Great Name. Books often receive a more favourable*

Acceptance upon the Account of the Worth and Merit of the Perſon they are addreſſed to: But that is not my Deſign; which if it were, I could never have made a more agreeable choice of a Patron than Your Grace, whoſe known Integrity and Learning, and whoſe Noble and Generous Sentiments of Religion, which you have ſtudiouſly endeavoured to inſtill into others, are enough to inſpire the moſt ſluggiſh Genius *to attempt ſomething that is not Common. I am obliged in Juſtice and Gratitude to preſent Your Grace with ſomething, and this*

this being the beſt I have, if it may not merit Praiſe and Approbation, yet at leaſt I hope it may appear to Your Grace to be not altogether Contemptible. And if ſome uncertain and wavering Sceptick *ſhall, by the reading of theſe Diſcourſes, reap any Benefit and Satisfaction, I ſhall think my ſelf to have obtained the chiefeſt end I aimed at. For, as I am ſenſible I cannot do all that Good that I would, in that narrow Sphere of Action wherein I move, ſo I had rather venture the various Cenſures of Men in the publiſhing my own*

Thoughts,

Thoughts, than not be aiding and aſſiſting (according to the utmoſt of my Ability) to form in the Minds of others the trueſt Conceptions of that Religion by which the Chriſtian World expects Immortal Bleſſedneſs. I moſt humbly beg Your Grace's Pardon, both for the boldneſs of my Addreſs, and for the Imperfections Your Grace will find in what I offer; which I hope I ſhall the more eaſily obtain upon the ſcore of the long Acquaintance I have had the Honour to have with Your Grace. Now that God *would long proſper Your Grace in Health and*

Happi-

The Epiſtle Dedicatory.

Happineſs, for the good of his Church, is the earneſt Prayer of,

My Lord,

Your Grace's moſt Humble
and Devoted Servant

Henry Hallywell.

A DE-

A DEFENCE OF *Revealed Religion.*

SERMON I.

ROM. I. 16.

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: For it is the Power of God unto Salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew *first, and also to the* Greek.

WE Live in an Age wherein Vice and Sin does infinitely abound; and as if the Depravity of our Nature were not a sufficient

Evil, and too great a cauſe of Mens Sorrow and Shame, they add to it and encreaſe it, by deſpiſing, ſcorning, and trampling under Foot the great means of redreſſing all their Evils, and doing themſelves good.

The Atheiſt ſtrives to undermine Religion by expoſing it to the World as a ridiculous piece of Folly. And this indeed is very agreeable and conſentaneous to his own Principles; for if there be no God, there can be no Religion. And as for the Prophane and Debauched Perſon, though he be not arrived to ſo high a pitch of Wickedneſs, as to ſay, *There is no God*, yet he wiſhes there were none, and endeavours to diſcountenance Religion as a flat and dull thing, unfit for a lively and brisk Spirit. And he would have all the World to believe that Religion

is

is only adapted to ſlaviſh Minds, who are ignorant of the Liberty of their own Natures, and do not know what a rare thing it is for a Man to enjoy all manner of ſenſual Pleaſures to the full.

Some ſuch Perſons as theſe the Apoſtle had met withal, who ſcorned the Preaching of the Croſs of Chriſt as a weak and contemptible piece of Folly. And they ſeem to upbraid him, as if he had undertook to inſtruct the World in a thing that he was not able to make good. For there ſeems to be implied an Objection made by ſome Perſons ſomething after this manner; as if ſome one had ſaid to the Apoſtle, You have introduced a new Religion into the World, and you ſeek to perſwade Men to embrace it in By-corners and remote Parts of the Empire: There you Preach it to a Company

of poor, ſilly, and illiterate People, and lead them away, becauſe they are eaſily deceived and know nothing. But if this which you call the Goſpel, be a thing of ſuch mighty concernment to the World, and if it be a Doctrine ſo highly Rational as you pretend, why do you not come and Preach it at *Rome* it ſelf, the Eye and Glory of the World, where all ſorts of wiſe Men on Earth are gathered together, who are able to detect and diſcover the Vanity of that Religion you would fain diſſeminate and ſpread abroad.

This ſeems to have been objected to the Apoſtle; to which he anſwers, *Ver.* 15. *So, as much as in me is, I am ready to Preach the Goſpel to you that are at* Rome *alſo; For I am not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt.* As if he had ſaid, That Goſpel or Religion which I declare,

is

is of ſuch high Conſequence to Mankind, and of ſuch an admirable Frame and Divine Contrivance, that I am not aſhamed of it whereſoever I come, but am ready to Preach it at *Rome* it ſelf, and do tell you, that it is not like an empty Piece of Jangling and vain Philoſophy, but the Power of God to the Salvation of the World, and the moſt effectual Inſtrument to wind off the Souls of Men from their Slavery to Sin and Satan, that ever was yet made known; and therefore both Jew and Gentile are obliged to believe and embrace it.

From whence we may make this Obſervation; *That the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus, which we call the Chriſtian Religion, and is contained in the Books of the New-Teſtament, is of ſuch a Nature that no Man need to be aſhamed of the Profeſſion of it.*

For the Apoſtle tells us, That it is the *Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believes.* And elſewhere he declares the Goſpel to be both the Power and the Wiſdom of God; 1 *Cor.* 1. 24. *We Preach Chriſt Crucified* (that is the Goſpel of Chriſt Crucified) *the Power of God*, it being ſo effectual to diſengage Men from the Kingdom of Satan; and the *Wiſdom* of GOD, in the fitneſs and ſuitableneſs of it for the obtaining that great End and Purpoſe. Now ſurely, he that looks upon Religion with a reaſonable Eye (as he ought to do) can never think he has any cauſe to be aſhamed of a thing that hath ſo much of God's Power, and Wiſdom conſpicuous in it. And for thoſe that can ſo confidently deride and ſcoff at it, they would do well to conſider how far they are from good Manners, and

from

from that common Civility that even Nature it ſelf teaches all Men, that is, to ſpeak Reverently of what God does, and to have honourable Thoughts of his Works.

But for the further Confirmation of this point, and for the building of us up more firmly in our moſt Holy Faith, I ſhall conſider what are the main cauſes of Shame, and upon what grounds we may juſtly be aſhamed of any Doctrine delivered to us; and then ſhew, that in none of theſe Reſpects we have any reaſon to be aſhamed of the Chriſtian Religion.

1. A firſt cauſe of ſhame is, If that which is delivered to us be not true. If a Man ſhould confidently entertain an Opinion that were falſe, and which there were no Grounds of Credibility for, and ſhould expoſe his Life and Fortunes to hazard and danger for it,

he would have great reaſon to be aſhamed of his Levity and Raſhneſs, and all Men beſides himſelf would conclude him guilty of an unpardonable Folly.

2. We may juſtly be aſhamed if the thing propounded to us be not Rational, that is, agreeable to thoſe common Notions of Reaſon and Underſtanding which God has planted in our Souls.

3. We have ſufficient cauſe of Shame and Confuſion if the Doctrine offered to us for our Faith and Belief be not Intelligible, *i. e.* eaſie to be underſtood by all thoſe to whom it is propounded. For if Chriſtianity were made up of a company of intricate and dark Riddles, only to amuſe the World, and to puzzle our Underſtandings, I do not ſee but that a Wiſe and Sober Perſon might have grounds enough to be aſhamed of it.

4. If

4. If it be not uſeful to the World, but contain only ſome poor and trivial things that are of no benefit to Men.

If Religion had indeed been thus, the Apoſtles themſelves might have been aſhamed to have made ſuch a ſtir in the World: And all Chriſtians that followed them would have been extremely out of Countenance when they had ſeen ſo little good and benefit of all that which was yet delivered as GOD's Will, and wherein he had ſhewed ſuch a wonderful piece of Art and Wiſdom. But now when we look upon Religion and find that it is moſt truly and certainly the Will of God delivered to the World. That it came from Heaven, and was atteſted by all the Evidences and Arguments that ſuch a thing is capable of; That God had an immediate hand in it, and that all its

its Authority was undoubtedly derived from him. Again, when we ſhall find that there is nothing in Chriſtianity, but what is highly rational and agreeable to our Intellectual Faculties, and for which we may be able to make the moſt reaſonable Apology and Defence. And further, when Chriſtianity is ſo plain and eaſie to be underſtood in all thoſe things which are indiſpenſably neceſſary to every Man's Salvation; ſo that the moſt ordinary Capacity may apprehend what is GOD's Will and meaning in it, and what he would have him to do. And laſtly, When we ſhall ſee, that Religion is a thing of no mean and low Concernment, but a matter of the greateſt Benefit and Advantage that ever was communicated to Mankind. When its great End and Deſign ſhall be diſcovered only to make Men everlaſtingly

laſtingly happy in another Life: When theſe things put together ſhall appear with irreſiſtable Evidence and Clearneſs, ſurely that Man muſt be bereaved of his Wits and Underſtanding that can be aſhamed of a Doctrine that has all theſe Qualifications.

In the firſt place then, to make it manifeſt that the Chriſtian Faith is a Doctrine worthy of all Acceptation, and of which there may be made the beſt Defence in the World, I ſhall ſhew by a few Arguments the Truth of it, *viz.* That God ſent his Son Jeſus to communicate this as his Mind and Will, and that he would have all the World to live in the Faith and Obedience of it.

[They that would have more full and ample ſatisfaction upon this Subject, may conſult that excellent Treatiſe of *Grotius*, of the *Truth*

Truth of Chriſtian Religion, tranſlated into *Engliſh* by Dr. *Patrick*, now the Reverend Biſhop of *Ely*.]

Now to this Purpoſe, let us conſider, That as to the matter of Fact concerning the Life and Actions of our bleſſed Saviour, his Death and Reſurrection, and his Aſcenſion into Heaven (which is the Ground and Foundation upon which Chriſtian Religion is built) it is not at all probable, either,

1. That the Apoſtles ſhould be deceived; Or,

2. That they ſhould deceive others.

1. It is not likely the Apoſtles ſhould be deceived, becauſe they received not the Relations which they delivered, by here-ſay, but were conſtant Attendants of our Lord and Saviour, and ſaw him work his Miracles, when he cured Diſeaſes, raiſed the Dead, and caſt out

out Devils. And therefore when the Apoſtles choſe another into the room of *Judas*, there is this reaſon given for it, *Acts* 1. 21. 22. *Wherefore of theſe Men which have Companied with us, all the time that the Lord Jeſus went in and out amongſt us, beginning from the Baptiſm of* John, *unto that ſame day that he was taken up from us, muſt one be Ordained to be a Witneſs with us of his Reſurrection.* Here was one who together with the reſt of the Apoſtles, was to aſſert upon his own Knowledge, the Actions of Jeſus, his Reſurrection from the Dead, and his Aſcenſion into Heaven. And therefore St. *Luke*, Chap. 1. 2. tells us, That the things which he wrote were ſuch as were delivered by them who were αὐτόπται Eye-witneſſes of them. And doubtleſs there can be no better Teſtimony in the World concerning the Truth of a mat-

matter of Fact, than from an Eye-witneſs of it, according to that common ſaying, *Pluris eſt unus ocularis teſtis, quam auriti decem,* one ocular Demonſtration is worth ten Hear-ſays. And this was the Anſwer that *Peter* and *John* gave to the great Council of the *Jews*, *Acts* 4. 20. *We cannot but ſpeak the things which we have ſeen and heard.*

But that we may not run over the whole Hiſtory of things in the Goſpel, I ſhall content my ſelf with that one, which is the Confirmation of all the reſt of the Miracles of Jeſus, that is, his Reſurrection from the dead. For (as St. *Paul* ſpeaks, 1 *Cor.* 15. 14.) *if Chriſt be not riſen, then our Preaching is vain, and the Faith of Chriſtians is likewiſe vain.* The Preaching of the Apoſtles would have been vain, becauſe they Exhorted Men to the Practice of the Commands and Pre-

Precepts of the Goſpel, in hopes of a glorious Immortality, and that their Labour and Pains ſhould be rewarded by the Reſurrection of their Bodies to eternal Life. Whereas if Chriſt be not riſen, there is then no Reward for Believers; and the great Noiſe and Talk of the Joys and Felicities of Pious Souls after this Life are nothing but the Dreams of Melancholick Perſons to amuſe the reſt of Mankind. And the Faith of Chriſtians (if Chriſt be yet in the Grave and under the Power of Death) will be as empty and vain, becauſe it is built upon a falſe Foundation. For the great Argument brought by the Apoſtles to prove the Divine Authority of the Doctrine they Preached, was the Reſurrection of Jeſus from the Dead; which if there had been no ſuch thing, St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 15. ſays of himſelf and the reſt

reſt of the Apoſtles, that they had been no better than ſo many *Falſe-Witneſſes* of God, abuſing his Name for the countenancing an Impoſture; which their Preaching had certainly been, if Chriſt had not really riſen from the Dead.

The Scripture aſſures us, *Acts* 1.3. That Jeſus ſhewed himſelf alive after his Death to his Diſciples, *by many infallible Proofs* [*i. e.* ſuch Evidences wherein there could be no miſtake] *being ſeen of them Forty days, and ſpeaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.* And if we diligently read the Hiſtory of the Goſpels, we ſhall find the Apoſtles to be very ſcrupulous in believing Chriſt's Reſurrection, till they had all ſeen him, and were convinced by as high Proofs as poſſibly could be offered to Mankind. And this their Cautiouſneſs and Wareneſs of being impoſed upon

upon, is a good Argument to us of their Sincerity and care of being fully ſatisfied of the Truth of it, before they went to divulge it to others. We read in *Mark* 16. 9. That Jeſus firſt appeared to *Mary Magdalen*, and ſhe ran with Joy to tell his weeping Friends, *that ſhe had ſeen the Lord*, but *they believed her not*, v. 11. Then he appears to two of his Diſciples in another Form, as they went to *Emaus*, and they told the reſt, but *neither would they believe them.* v. 13. Then he appears to the Eleven Apoſtles, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardneſs of Heart, becauſe they believed not them which had ſeen him after he was riſen, *ver.* 14. And that he might confirm the Faith of one of his Diſciples who doubted more than all the reſt, ſhews him the very hole that was made in his ſide with the Spear, and the prints of

the Nails in his Hands and Feet. And all this, to the end that they might be ſenſibly aſſured that it was he himſelf, no deluſive Spectrum or Ghoſt, but the very ſame Jeſus which was Crucified upon the Croſs. Now from hence we ſee it plain, that the Apoſtles could not be deceived; for they took all imaginable care to avoid it; they Eat and Drank with him, and ſaw him with their own Eyes, leiſurely lifted up from them and carried up into Heaven.

II. It is not probable the Apoſtles would go about to deceive others; For,

1. They might eaſily have been diſcovered. They lived in a knowing Age, wherein all Arts and Sciences flouriſhed more than ever they had done before; and there wanted not thoſe who had Sence and Wit enough to have found

found it out, if it had been a Cheat. The Apoſtles peremptorily affirmed, That Jeſus who ſuffered under *Pontius Pilate* was the Author of the Religion they Preached, and that after his Crucifixion he roſe again from the Dead. Now if there had been no ſuch Perſon as Jeſus that had then lived; If he had not been Crucified, and really dead on the Croſs; or if there had been no ſuch Governour of *Judea* as *Pontius Pilate*, nor any ſuch *Roman* Emperour as *Tiberius*. If the Apoſtles had failed in any of theſe remarkable Circumſtances of Story, there had been great reaſon to have queſtioned what they delivered. But we find all this confirm'd by the *Roman* Hiſtorians themſelves; and neither *Jews* nor *Pagans* ever denied the Matters of Fact which the Apoſtles relate, becauſe they were ſo newly done,

that if there had been any thing of Untruth, it would very eaſily have been detected by Perſons then living. Beſides, had the Reſurrection of our Lord been a Falſehood, St. *Paul* muſt be extremely Impudent, nay Imprudent to bring Five hundred upon the Stage to aſſert a Lye; ſince it is not the manner of a Cheater to provoke ſo many Witneſſes.

2. *Cui bono?* To what end or Purpoſe ſhould they aſſert a Falſehood? Or what Inducements could they have to broach a Deluſion? All that can be ſaid is, That perhaps they might do it, to have the Name and Glory of being the Authors of a new Sect. This indeed might pleaſe the light and frothy Humour of ſome vain-glorious Perſon, but the ſedate and compoſed Spirit of the Holy Apoſtles was far from any ſuch poor deſign.

ſign. But to anſwer to this more particularly:

1. It is not likely they ſhould lay the Foundation of the beſt Religion in the World upon a mere Cheat. There was no colour for Lying or Fraud in the matter, and we know that *Nemo gratis fit malus*, 'tis rare for a Man to be wicked for nothing. They ſought not themſelves in it; for it is evident that they were Perſecuted, Diſgraced, and ſuffered exquſite Tortures for Profeſſing that Jeſus was raiſed from the Dead. And for Secular and worldly Advantages they could hope for none, becauſe all thoſe things were in the hands either of *Jews* or *Pagans*, who were both profeſſed Enemies of the Name of Chriſt. Nor can we think that the Apoſtles ſhould take it upon their Death, and ſtand to it to their laſt Breath, if they had

not believed themſelves ſufficiently aſſured of that Truth for which they died. Surely Men of calm and ſober Reaſon, would not be ſo prodigal of their Blood, as to throw it away upon ſome vain Rumour or popular Report.

Let us conſider a little the Apoſtle St. *Paul*, who was a Man of great Learning among the *Jews*, very zealous for his Religion, and one that had attained to no ſmall favour among the Grandees of his Nation, for his vigorous Perſecution of the Chriſtians. This Man tells us, that when he was going to *Damaſcus* with a Commiſſion from the High-Prieſts to bring them bound to *Jeruſalem* that profeſſed the Faith of Chriſt, to be Puniſhed: Jeſus met him in the way in a Light brighter than the Sun, tells him who he was, and warns him that he ſhould no lon-

ger

ger Perſecute his Diſciples: Upon this the Apoſtle turns Chriſtian, and became a zealous Profeſſor of the Faith which before he Perſecuted. Now, if there had been any Fraud or Deceit in this, can we imagine St. *Paul* would ſo confidently appeal to it, and tell King *Agrippa*, *That this was not a thing done in a Corner, where there was no Body to atteſt it.* If therefore we believe St. *Paul* to be a Man of Sence and Reaſon, we cannot imagine that he would have quitted all the Favour and Encouragement he might have had among the *Jews*, and run himſelf into certain Dangers, even to the loſs of his very Life, if he had not been well aſſured that Jeſus was alive, and able to make good all he ſaid.

2. We find that the Apoſtles in their Writings were Men of

great Integrity and Uprightneſs, of exemplary Humility, and hearty Lovers of God and all the World, and we may reaſonably believe that ſuch Perſons as thoſe would not ſet on foot a Falſhood; and ſuch a Falſhood as they ſaw would draw vaſt multitudes to Ruine and Deſtruction. Nor is there any thing more contrary to the Principles of Chriſt's Religion, which not only baniſhes all Lying and Deceit as hateful Crimes, but enjoyns ſuch a ſincere and univerſal Love to the whole World, as to be ready to lay down our Lives for one another.

If Men could be ſo wicked as upon Self-ends to broach a Falſhood, yet if we attend to the Goodneſs of God, we muſt neceſſarily conclude, that he would long e're this, have diſcovered the Forgery. For Chriſtianity is ſo framed,

framed, that the moſt innocent and harmleſs Perſons in the World, who are the moſt ſincere in their Love to God and Man, are the moſt eaſily taken with it. And therefore if it had been built upon a Falſhood and an Untruth, the goodneſs of God was highly concerned to detect the Impoſture, and not to ſuffer thoſe who endeavoured to ſerve him in the beſt manner they could, to be ſo fatally entangled with an Error that would expoſe them to inevitable Ruine and Deſtruction.

Now, That I may compleat this Argument againſt all Objections and Cavils whatſoever, I ſhall further add, That the Apoſtles gave as full and high a Teſtimony of the Reſurrection of Jeſus as it is poſſible for Men to give for any Matter of Fact in the World. To which purpoſe

I ſhall borrow ſome few Particulars from a late Ingenious Author: *We muſt conſider* (ſays he) *what thoſe Circumſtances are, which are moſt commonly requiſite to make Humane Teſtimony credible, and received by all the World as true.*

See a late Treatiſe, Intituled, A Letter to a Deiſt.

1. The firſt thing is, if Men teſtifie nothing but what they ſaw.

2. If they teſtifie it at no long diſtance of time from the matter of Fact, or thing done.

3. If their Witneſs and Teſtimony be plain, and delivered without ambiguous and doubtful Expreſſions.

4. If a great number ſhall agree in teſtifying the ſame thing.

5. Laſtly, If they are ready to part with all that is valuable to Mankind, rather than deny the Truth of what they have teſtified.

Now,

Now, where all theſe meet and agree, it were meer Frowardneſs and Humour to expect any further Evidence of the Truth of a matter of Fact. Let us examine then the Teſtimony of the Apoſtles concerning Chriſt's Reſurrection by theſe Rules.

1. The Apoſtles witneſſed nothing but what they themſelves ſaw. They beheld our Saviour divers times after his Reſurrection, they Eat and Drank with him; nor were they haſty and raſh in their Belief, but ſuſpended their Aſſent, till after the moſt full and convictive Evidence, that is the Teſtimony of their Senſes: which Teſtimony, when rightly circumſtantiated is infallibly true, as may eaſily be demonſtrated. Hence it is that the Apoſtle appeals to them as one ſure Evidence againſt which there can be no diſpute, 1 *John* 1. 1.

That

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our Eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled.

2. The Apoſtles did not ſtay any long time before they made this their Teſtimony, but ſoon after the matter of Fact, and while all the Circumſtances were lively and freſh in their Memories. And by this their early and timely Witneſs, they prevented the cavils of their Enemies, who would have been ready to have objected (had they ſtayed any long time) if the things they now avouched were true, why had they not diſcovered them ſooner? Therefore upon the day of *Pentecoſt*, which was but a few days after our Saviour Chriſt's Aſcenſion into Heaven, the Apoſtles in a full Aſſembly declared Chriſt's Reſurrection (thoſe very Men that put

put him to Death being alive and in being) which they conſtantly afterwards and boldly aſſerted in the open face of the World.

3. If the Apoſtles had had a Mind to deceive when they affirmed, that Chriſt was riſen from the dead, they would without queſtion have ſpoken it in ſuch doubtful terms that their meaning ſhould not preſently have been underſtood. And whenever the thing ſhould be examined and narrowly looked into, they might ſecurely eſcape by the favour and benefit of ſome ambiguous Expreſſion, which might cunningly be drawn to different Senſes and Acceptations. But on the contrary the Apoſtles give their Teſtimony of Chriſt's Reſurrection in open, plain, and direct Terms, on purpoſe that no body ſhould mi-

miſtake their meaning; *Acts* 2.32. 36. *This Jeſus* [he whom before he had told them they had taken, and by wicked hands Crucified and Slain] *hath God raiſed up, whereof we all are Witneſſes. Therefore let all the Houſe of* Iſrael *know aſſuredly, that God hath made that ſame Jeſus, whom ye have Crucified, both Lord and Chriſt.* And hence it is that this very ſame Apoſtle, divers Years afterwards with great Integrity and Sincerity makes this open profeſſion, 2 *Pet.* 1. 16, 17, 18. *For we have not followed cunningly deviſed Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but were Eye-witneſſes of His Majeſty; For he received from God the Father Honour and Glory, when there came ſuch a voice to him from the excellent Glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleaſed. And this voice which came from*

from Heaven we heard, when we were with him in the Holy Mount.

4. If there had been but one ſingle Witneſs of Chriſt's Reſurrection, the World would have been apt to have ſuſpected the Truth of this Teſtimony: But this being a thing upon which the Ground and Foundation of Chriſtianity lay, it was confidently affirmed by the Twelve Apoſtles; as in the forementioned place, *Of this we all are Witneſſes*, ſays St. *Peter*. Neither were the Apoſtles only Witneſſes of our Lord's Reſurrection, but above Five hundred more, who at one time ſaw Jeſus after he was riſen from the Dead, as St. *Paul* tells us, 1 *Cor.* 15. 6. And among all this Company, it is very hard to think that there ſhould be none ſo honeſt as to diſcover the Cheat, if there had been any, eſpecially when the free and

open

open Profeſſion of it was every way attended with ſo much Danger, Infamy, and Diſgrace.

5. Laſtly, That which compleats the Credibility of this Teſtimony is this, That there was no one of the Apoſtles, nor ſcarce any of the reſt, but expoſed themſelves to the hazard and danger of loſing all that was dear and valuable to them, rather than they would deny the Truth of what they Witneſſed. If theſe things had hapned in a careleſs and drowſie Age, when People had been ſo indifferent about Religion as never to matter what was propounded to them; it is poſſible then that Men might have gone on ſo long in a Lye, till they had gotten Intereſt enough to propagate it for a Truth. But the Apoſtles no ſooner appeared witneſſing theſe things; but they met with

an

an early and vigorous oppoſition, and that from the chiefeſt Men in Power, who made it their buſineſs to ſuppreſs them. Both *Jews* and *Gentiles* were ſet againſt them, and they had no other favour ſhewed them but this, that if they would Recant what they had ſaid of Jeſus, and leave off ſpeaking any more in his Name, they might enjoy their Eaſe and Quiet, and perhaps have ſome Rewards into the Bargain: But if they would perſiſt and go on, they muſt look for the ſharpeſt Trials and Perſecutions which indeed theſe Holy Men met withal almoſt in all Places where they came. Now had the Reſurrection of Jeſus from the Dead been only a feigned Story of the Apoſtles, and the reſt that had combined to ſpread it abroad, it is poſſible that while they met with no hazard nor danger, they might

carry on the Cheat, yet when Life lay at Stake, it is very hard to think that any one would die for that which he knew to be an Untruth. But here we find in this caſe that the Apoſtles freely and joyfully ventured their Lives for the Truth of this, and the moſt of them actually loſt their Lives for it. Now, he muſt be of a very eaſie and credulous Nature, and fit for nothing but to be impoſed upon, that can believe ſo many Men of good Sence and ſound Underſtanding, would die for a Story of their own Invention, and which their own Conſciences would tell them was a notorious Falſhood.

By what hath been ſaid, it is apparent, that there was as high and full a Teſtimony given to the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt as is poſſible to be given to any matter of Fact. And this being put out

out of doubt, there can be no ſcruple left for any of the other Parts of the Hiſtory of the Goſpel, ſince the ſame Perſons that atteſted the one, did likewiſe aſſure to the World the other. That is, the ſame Arguments which convince us of the Truth of Chriſt's Reſurrection, do likewiſe eſtabliſh us in the Faith of the whole Chriſtian Religion. Neither do I know what can with any colour be objected againſt this, unleſs Men out of an obſtinate Humour, will rather adhere to that poor Subterfuge of the *Jews*, and for the ſpreading abroad of which they gave large Money to the Soldiers, *viz. That his Diſciples came by Night and ſtole him away while the Watch Slept.* Which becauſe by it they intended to diſcredit our Saviour and his Doctrine, I ſhall ſhew how vain it is.

1. It is not likely the Diſciples, who fled from him when he was taken, and the ſtouteſt of them denied him, ſhould now, that he was dead, venture to ſteal his Body from a Guard of Soldiers.

2. How improbable is it that all the Watch ſhould be aſleep at one time?

3. If they were all aſleep, how could they tell that the Diſciples took him away, and not that he aroſe from the dead by the mighty Power of God, as the Apoſtles affirmed?

4. How could it be, that the Diſciples ſhould come juſt at that very time, when they were all aſleep?

5. How could they go ſo ſilently to work, as to roll away the Stone, and to take out the Body (all which would have made ſome noiſe, and took up ſome

ſome time) and yet none of the Watch hear them? Beſides, there is another Circumſtance, which cannot well agree with the haſt and fear theſe poor Diſciples muſt needs be in, in ſuch an Attempt; and that is, That care which was taken to lay the Linnen Cloaths by themſelves in the Sepulchre, *Luke* 24. 12. And yet the Napkin that was about his Head, did not lie with the reſt of the Linnen Cloaths, but was wrapped together in a place by it ſelf: *Joh.* 20.7. which is the moſt unlikely thing in the World, that the Diſciples ſhould be ſo curious in ſorting the Linnen, which they would either have taken away with the Body, or at leaſt not have ſpent time to wrap it ſo carefully together.

6. Laſtly, Suppoſe they had taken away the Body, *Quid ex cadavere emolumenti?* What benefit

could they hope from a dead Carkaſs? Would that be enough to make them forſake their deareſt Relations, to lay aſide the Sentiments and Opinions in which they had for a long time been Educated and Inſtructed, to expoſe themſelves to a thouſand vexatious Reproaches, and at laſt to a vile and ignominious Death, and all to maintain the Credit of a Perſon that had ſo groſly fruſtrated their Expectations? Surely, he that can believe ſuch things of the Apoſtles, muſt offer the greateſt Violence in the World not only to his own, but to the Underſtanding of all Mankind.

And now we cannot but ſee the unreaſonableneſs of Infidelity; that it muſt be either a very crooked and untoward Education, or an obſtinate, baſe, and perverſe Spirit, that carries Men with ſo much con-

contempt and ſcorn againſt the belief of the Holy Scriptures. For if theſe Perſons were asked upon what account they give credit to *Thucydides's Hiſtory of the Peloponneſian War*, or *Plutarch's Lives*, or any other ancient Hiſtorian; they muſt ſay that the conſtant and univerſal conſent of the moſt Learned and Judicious, hath all along determined thoſe Perſons to be the Authors of thoſe Books, and that they were Perſons of Credit and Veracity. And is it not meer Frowardneſs, Humour, and Fantaſtickneſs to reject the Teſtimony of the Catholick Church handed down ſucceſſively for Sixteen hundred Years and upwards, concerning the Books of the New-Teſtament? Let them but have the ſame Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind in reſpect of the Hiſtory of the Goſpels that they retain in

behalf of the forementioned Hiſtorians, and they muſt of neceſſity confeſs that there are at leaſt as many and as weighty Motives of credibility for that as poſſibly can be excogitated for theſe.

Moreover, according to the different Natures of things, there are different ways of Probation, and no Man will expect a Mathematical Demonſtration to prove a Moral Propoſition; It is ſufficient to every Ingenuous Nature that there be as full and clear Evidence as the matter can bear. Hence our Lord and Saviour (though it might ſeem more ſatisfactory to have ſeen him as the Apoſtles did with a Man's own Eyes) yet pronounces them *Bleſſed that have not ſeen, and yet have believed*: intimating, that it is a more generous Faith to believe unſuſpected Witneſſes upon

John 20. 29.

upon the full and clear Evidence of the matter of Fact, than if this Faith were conſtrained, and as it were neceſſitated by ocular Demonſtration. Hence we may underſtand the meaning of thoſe words of our Saviour, *Mat.*12.32. *And whoſoever ſpeaketh a word againſt the Son of Man, it ſhall be forgiven him: But whoſoever ſpeaketh againſt the Holy Ghoſt, it ſhall not be forgiven him, neither in this World, neither in the World to come*; that is, though it were a great Sin not to believe our Saviour to be ſent from God, after he had given ſuch manifeſt proof of it by his numerous and ſtupendious Miracles, yet the Sin was not come to its height, becauſe there wanted yet further Evidence; Our Lord was not yet riſen from the Dead: But after his Reſurrection and Aſcenſion into

into Heaven, and as a Confirmation of this, the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt upon the Apoſtles (who was alſo one of Chriſt's Witneſſes) then the Sin became deadly, becauſe the laſt means were uſed, and the fulleſt proofs of Credibility given that could be expected for matter of Fact; that is, there was every thing done which might procure Belief in a diſintereſſed Perſon; And therefore, for any obſtinately to contradict this, is quite to preſcind his own hopes, and ſhut the door againſt himſelf, by wilfully rejecting all thoſe Arguments which might and ought to have gained belief. I pray God open the Eyes of thoſe who ſlight and undervalue Chriſtianity, as if it were not πιστὸς λόγος, καὶ πάσης ἀποδοχῆς ἄξιος, a faithful and true Word, and

1 Tim. 4. 9.

and every way *Worthy to be Received*, that they may timely ſee and repent of their Error, and through a ſincere acknowlegment of the Truth may be eternally Saved.

A DE-

A DEFENCE OF *Revealed Religion.*

SERMON II.

ROM. I. 16.

For I am not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt ——

WE have ſhewn from theſe Words, That the Hiſtory of the Life and Actions of our bleſſed Saviour, his Death, Reſurrection, and Aſcenſion into Heaven is true, and being ſo, we have no reaſon to be aſhamed of our Religion, which

which is built upon theſe things. Truth is a thing that none need to be aſhamed of, becauſe it is a Perfection, a Ray, and Beam that deſcends from God the Fountain of all Truth. Now the Truth of the Hiſtory of the Goſpel depending upon the Veracity of thoſe that wrote it, we ſhewed that the Apoſtles could not be deceived, becauſe they were preſent and Eye-witneſſes of the things they ſet down. And we have no reaſon to ſuſpect they would deceive others, becauſe they might have been diſcovered, and beſides had no ſelf-ends nor deſigns in broaching a Falſhood, but on the contrary, were ready to Sacrifice their own Lives for the Truth of what they ſaid; and laſtly, That they gave as high a Teſtimony of the Reſurrection of Jeſus (on which all his other Miracles depended)

as

as poſſibly can be given by Men to any Thing or Matter in the World.

2. The next cauſe of Shame is, if the Doctrine delivered to us be not Rational; therefore we come now to ſhew that Chriſtianity, or the Doctrine of the Goſpel is rational, that is, agreeable with thoſe common Notions of Reaſon and Underſtanding, which God has planted in the Souls of all Mankind. And indeed, if we believe that it is true, and came from God, it muſt neceſſarily follow, that there can be nothing contained in it that is unreaſonable; foraſmuch as God being the higheſt Reaſon, cannot be the Author of any thing that is unreaſonable; for then he would be the Author of ſomething unlike himſelf, and that had no Analogy or Correſpondence with any of his Attributes.

butes. And therefore to affirm that GOD can propound to us what is altogether Irrational, and bears no Harmony or Agreement with any of our Faculties, is to make him the Author of Nonſence, Contradictions, and Impoſſibilities.

Reaſon is that Light and Candle of the Lord, which he has ſet up in the Souls of Men to guide them ſafe from Error, Falſhood, and Deluſion. And when we ſay a thing is reaſonable, we ſay that it hath a Conformity with thoſe Intellectual Principles the ſovereign Author of our Beings has planted in us. There is a ſuitableneſs and agreeableneſs of ſuch things with the rational frame and make of our own Souls. Therefore the Apoſtle calls our Conformity to the Divine Will (which he terms *Rom.* 12. 1. a *preſenting our Bodies a living Sacrifice, Holy*

holy and acceptable unto God) *a reaſonable Service*, that is, ſuch a Worſhip (as if we underſtand our ſelves) is fitted and accommodated to our natural Faculties of Reaſon and Underſtanding. And hence it is that St. *Peter* bids us *to be ready*, πρὸς ἀπολογίαν *to give an Anſwer*, or make an Apology to *every Man that asks us a Reaſon of the hope that is in us*, *i. e.* he would have us prepared to give a ſatisfactory and rational account why we are Chriſtians. But now if there were any thing in Chriſtian Religion that were unreaſonable, what Apology could be made for it? Or how ſhould any Man defend a thing that were wholly contrary to that Light which God has ſet up in his Soul to diſcern between Truth and Falſhood: So that if there lie an Obligation upon us to give a Reaſon of our Faith,

then we may be ſure there is no part of it unreaſonable.

But here we muſt note in the mean time, that it is one thing to ſay that there are ſome Articles of the Chriſtian Faith above Humane Reaſon, and another thing to ſay they are unreaſonable or contrary to ſound Reaſon. The frame of Chriſtianity it ſelf is called by St. *Paul*, 1 *Tim.* 3. 16. μυστήριον μέγα, *a great Myſtery*, and a Myſtery we know muſt have ſomething hidden and recondit in it, which is diſcerned only by capable Minds. And there may be, and doubtleſs are, ſome ſacred and hidden Doctrines in Chriſtian Religion above Humane Reaſon in this Senſe, *viz.* That our Reaſon could never have lighted upon them, or found them out, without a Divine Revelation. But notwithſtanding theſe Myſterious Truths are very agreeable with

with our Reaſon now they are diſcovered, and there is a rational Defence to be made for them, and a ſatisfactory Account to be given of every one of them. We could never by the bare help of Reaſon, have known any thing of the Union of God with Humane Nature; nor diſcovered the Doctrine of the ſacred Trinity, nor the Myſtery of the Reſurrection of our Bodies, nor the Joys and Felicities of Heaven, if God had not revealed theſe things to us. But now, that they are made a part of our Faith, we can ſhew that none of them is contradictory to the Principles of ſound Reaſon.

If therefore there be any unreaſonableneſs in Chriſtianity, it muſt ariſe either,

1. From the Frame and Contexture of it. Or,

2. From the Doctrines contained in it.

That there is no unreaſonableneſs or incongruity in the Frame of Chriſtianity will appear thus; the great End and Deſign of it, is to releaſe and free the Souls of Men from a State of Sin and Evil, into which they had unhappily plunged themſelves, and to recover them into a holy, blameleſs, and heavenly Life and Nature, that behaving themſelves harmleſly and unblameably as the Children of GOD, though encompaſſed with many Hardſhips and Afflictions which they meet withal in their Paſſage through the Wilderneſs of this World, they may at laſt, thro' his infinite Goodneſs, arrive by orderly ſteps and degrees to the Land of Righteouſneſs, their ancient Inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven. This is the free Coun-

Counſel and Determination of Almighty God, which flowed only from his immenſe and boundleſs Love.

Now, the Methods and Ways which God hath made choice of to bring this great deſign about, are ſuch, ſo fitted and adapted to to our Caſe and Condition, and ſo agreeable to the Nature of reaſonable Creatures, that if a diſintereſſed and unprejudiced Perſon were to ſpeak his Mind, he would ſay, That neither the Wit of Men nor Angels could find out a more agreeable and effectual means for the recovery of the World, than what is already made uſe of in the contrivance of the Goſpel. For here God hath conſulted the Weakneſſes, Infirmities, Prejudices and Imperfections of Mankind, which they had contracted by a long Degeneracy and Corruption,

and Corruption, and which were become ſo inveterate and deeply radicated, as not to be removed but by ſuch a Diſpenſation as might ſo far gratifie Humane Affections and natural Propenſions, as might be conſiſtent with the Honour and Sanctity of the Divine Nature. And this is that which St. *Paul* calls the *Fooliſhneſs of Preaching*, 1 Cor. 1. 21. *For after that, in the Wiſdom of God, the World by Wiſdom knew not God, it pleaſed God by the Fooliſhneſs of Preaching to ſave them that believe.* Which is not ſo to be underſtood, as if the *Pagan* World had no knowledge of the one only true God, the Creator and Governour of all things, (forthen the Apoſtle would have contradicted what he had ſaid in another place, *Rom.* 1. 19. where he ſays the τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, that which is knowable, or may be

be known of GOD, was manifeſt within them) but that the generality of the World before Chriſtianity, by their natural Light and Contemplation of the Works of GOD, did not attain to ſuch a Practical Knowledge of GOD, as might both free them from Idolatry, and effectually bring them to a Holy Life; to both which ends Chriſtian Religion was deſigned of GOD that it ſhould attain: Therefore it *pleaſed God* [*by the fooliſhneſs of Preaching*] *to ſave them that believe*, *i. e.* by a way of condeſcending Wiſdom, gratifying all our innocent Propenſions, and accommodating it ſelf ſo far to the radicated and inveterate Prepoſitions of Humane Minds.

To give ſome Inſtances of this condeſcending Wiſdom; beſides the general Impurity and Corruption of the Lives of Men,

a Learned Jewiſh Author gives this Account of the *Pagan* Polytheiſm and Idolatry; 'The Idolaters '(ſays he) firſt argued thus in re- 'ſpect of God; That ſince he 'was of ſuch tranſcendent Perfecti- 'on above Men, it was not poſſible 'for Men to be united to, or have 'Communion with him, other- 'wiſe than by means of certain 'middle Beings or Mediators; 'as it is the manner of Earthly 'Kings to have Petitions conveyed 'to them by the hands of Medi- 'ators and Interceſſors. *Secondly*, 'They thus argued alſo in reſpect 'of themſelves; That being Cor- 'poreal, ſo that they could not 'apprehend God abſtractly, they 'muſt needs have ſomething ſen- 'ſible to excite and ſtir up their 'Devotion, and to fix their ima- 'ginations upon. Here being then ſo early a Prepoſſeſſion and gene-

See Dr. Cudworth *Intel. Syſt. l.* 1. *c.* 4. *p.* 468.

ral

ral debauching of Men's Minds, Divine Goodneſs and Wiſdom hath ſo condeſcended to Humane Frailties and Inclinations, as inſtead of that multitude of *Middle Beings or Mediators* (which *Apuleius* calls, *Inter terricolas Cælicolaſque Vectores, hinc precum, inde donorum, qui ultrò citróque pertant, hinc Petitiones inde Suppetias*: A kind of Carriers between the Inhabitants of Heaven and Earth, who travelling to and fro, carry our Prayers and Petitions thither, and bring from thence Gifts and Supplies for us) to conſtitute and appoint *One Mediator between God and Man, the Man Chriſt Jeſus*, who offers up our Petitions, and intercedes with GOD and procures Bleſſings and Favours for us. By his Intervention we receive ſeaſonable Supplies for all our Exigences and Neceſſities here, and he takes care to conduct us at laſt

De Deo Socratis.

to

to that Immortal Glory that he himſelf is now poſſeſſed of. And that we may not err in transferring our Worſhip upon the Creature, upon the Account that we can have no abſtracted Conception of GOD, and in this our Earthly State need ſomething to invigorate our Devotion, and fix our Imagination upon, GOD hath cloathed himſelf with our Fleſh and Blood, and taken into a near Union with himſelf the Soul and Body of our Lord Jeſus; ſo that though rude and ignorant Mortals might fancy GOD as a pure and immenſe Spirit too, raiſed an Object for them in this their degenerate Condition to have any Conception of, yet what is ſenſible and viſible and congenerous with themſelves, they muſt needs have an apprehenſion of, and ſuch is the Body of our Lord Jeſus, which is the Temple wherein now the

the Divinity is enſhrined, and wherein the *Schechinah* or glorious Majeſty and Preſence of God reſides and manifeſts it ſelf. Which is a clear Inſtance of the condeſcending Wiſdom of GOD, which in compliance with the Prepoſſeſſions and Miſtakes of Mankind, wherein they were fatally and inextricably involved, hath provided a viſible Object of their Worſhip and Adoration, by uniting himſelf with Humane Fleſh. I might inſtance in divers other Congruities, wherein Chriſtianity is ſo exquiſitely fitted to redeem the World from the Tyranny of Satan, and yet to gratifie even in a ſenſible manner all the more innocent Propenſions and Inclinations of Mankind: But I ſhall have occaſion to take notice of ſome in the Progreſs of my Diſcourſe.

It will now be requiſite to take a more near and intimate view of the frame and contexture of Chriſtianity, wherein we ſhall with admiration behold a mighty congruity with our natural Faculties, and a wonderful compliance all along with our Infirmities and Neceſſities. For what can be thought more becoming and reaſonable, than

1. That ſome extraordinary Perſon ſhould be ſent from Heaven, who ſhould in the moſt convincing manner aſſure Men of the Will of God? Now this is already done; For by the Goſpel we are aſſured that Jeſus Chriſt, the only begotten Son of GOD hath appeared upon Earth to declare his Father's Will unto Men. And by this way of proceeding, GOD not only conciliates Reverence and Eſteem to the Doctrine that was deli-

delivered, but gives an evident and mighty demonſtration of his infinite Love and Goodneſs, and that he is really deſirous of Mens eternal Happineſs and Welfare. In that the Will of GOD was diſcovered and made known by a Perſon ſo near and dear to him as his own Son, is a ſufficient ground of Reverence and Eſteem. Since all People in the World have ever received a Meſſage from Heaven with the higheſt Veneration, and ſo much the more as the Perſon that delivered it was of higher and greater worth. And this was ſo general a Perſuaſion, that the moſt famous Law-givers amongſt the *Pagans*, that they might make their Laws paſs the better, and find a more ready Acceptation with the People, they feigned ſome Heavenly Power or other to be Author of them. And what was but pretended

tended by them, was really and truly performed by our bleſſed Saviour, who being the eternal Son of GOD, clothed himſelf with Fleſh and Blood, and aſſerted his Commiſſion to be from GOD, and was owned by a Voice from Heaven to be what he declared himſelf. And leſt this ſhould not be enough to convince the World, and through their groſs Infidelity, they ſhould not give that reverence and ready compliance that is due to ſo great a Majeſty; beſides, the reiterating this Voice at two other times before unſuſpected Witneſſes, GOD endues our Lord and Saviour with ſuch a miraculous Power as no Man ever had before. So that it was truly ſaid of him by the Multitude, upon the caſting out of a Devil, *Mat.* 9. 33. *That it was never ſo ſeen in* Iſrael. Here was ſufficient Evidence to

prove

prove that Chriſt was ſent from God. But that there might be nothing wanting to give the higheſt certainty that ſo great a Truth is capable of, after the *Jews* had put Jeſus to Death as a Deceiver, God openly vindicates his Innocency, by raiſing him from the Dead, by which we have all the aſſurance imaginable, that what our Lord ſpake and did in his Life-time, he acted by divine Deſignation and Appointment.

2. It appears very reaſonable that this Perſon whom God intruſts with the Delivery of his Will, ſhould ſhew us by his own Example what kind of Life it is that God requires of us, and which will at laſt procure our happineſs. For by how much the more Examples prevail with Men than naked Precepts and Perſuaſions, by ſo much the more will this Divine Perſon

Perſon conſult our Frailties and Infirmities, who are with greater eaſineſs allured to walk in that Path wherein we have ſeen another go before us. And ſuch a courſe as this will give great Eaſe and Relief to the Minds of Men, that GOD requires no Impoſſibilities of them, when they ſee one dwelling in their own Nature, and ſurrounded with the ſame Infirmities, and yet living up exactly to the Rules of that Divine Life he preſcribes to others.

And in this Example of Chriſt, there is a double Convenience,

1. Here we are taught in a familiar way, by one of the ſame Fleſh and Blood with our ſelves. When the Will of GOD was delivered upon Mount *Sinai* to the *Jews*, it was in ſuch a terrible and amazing manner, that the People were affrighted and aſtoniſhed at it.

it. As it is natural for all unuſual and terrible things to cauſe a horror and dread in weak and frail Mortals. Therefore it is infinitely more agreeable and deſirable that God ſhould manifeſt his Will in the mildeſt, ſweeteſt, and moſt attractive manner, which could no better way be done, than that this Perſon who came from him ſhould be cloathed with Fleſh and Blood. For hereby our Weakneſs is conſulted, and we have a mighty comfort in our greateſt Streights and Neceſſities, being aſſured (as the Scripture ſpeaks, *Heb.* 4. 15, 16.) *That we have not ſuch an High Prieſt that cannot be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities, but ſuch an one as was in all points tempted as we are, though without Sin.* And becauſe through a ſenſe of our own Guiltineſs, we are apt to be afraid of the Majeſty of God, and dare

not approach unto him; Now, that he condeſcends to viſit us in our own Likeneſs, and inſtruct us by one of our Brethren, we come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find χάριν εἰς εὔκαιρον βοήθειαν Grace for ſeaſonable Relief.

2. In the Example of Chriſt we ſee what little regard is had of all thoſe things which the carnal and ſenſual Man ſo much prizes and values; and that the Divine and Heavenly Life is no part of any of theſe things. Such as Pride and Vain-glory, Worldly Power, and Dominion, Covetouſneſs, and an immoderate deſire and hankering after ſenſual Pleaſures. Theſe are things that debaſe, inebriate, and intoxicate the carnal Mind, and from which luſcious and powerful Ineſcations our Lord and Saviour came to looſe and ſet us free.

And

And therefore our Lord choſe not to be born in a ſplendid manner, but of a poor Virgin that had but a pair of Turtle-Doves to offer for his Redemption, and to be Cradled in a Manger among the meaneſt of his Creatures. And as his Birth was humble and mean, ſo all his Life-time he refuſed all Earthly Splendor and Glory; To inſtruct us, That the true Advancement and Perfection of our Souls conſiſts in the loweſt and moſt humble Reſignation of themſelves to the Will of GOD. And that the more unaffected a Man lives to the Complacencies and Delights of the Animal Life, the more he Spiritualizes his Soul, and makes it capable of enjoying Communion with GOD.

Our moſt Holy Lord never coveted after Earthly Riches and Poſſeſſions, that he might lead our

Minds from this Dunghil to the fair Manſions of Heaven, and ſhew us that *Man lives not by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the Mouth of God.* The whole courſe of his Life was a continued contradiction of the flattering Pleaſures of Fleſh and Blood, and a perpetual ſlighting and undervaluing all that which the World calls Happineſs, teaching us that the true divine Life (though it be not accompanied with any Earthly Advantages, ſuch as Honour, and Wealth, and Power) is more dear and valuable in God's Eyes, than any thing in the whole comprehenſion of Nature beſides.

3. It ſeems further mighty agreeable and conſentaneous to Reaſon, that ſince Mankind had ſo foully revolted from God, and lapſed ſo deeply from the eternal Laws

Laws of Righteouſneſs, there ſhould be ſome effectual courſe found out, whereby to demonſtrate the Anger and Diſpleaſure of God conceived againſt Sin, and withal to reconcile the World unto himſelf.

Though it be true, that it is no breach of Law or Juſtice for a Perſon to recede from his Right, yet God being the ſupream Governour of the World, if he ſhould have pardoned Sin upon no Terms, or upon ſuch as had been light and trifling, it would have emboldned Men in their Wickedneſs, ſince they could obtain their Pardon at ſuch a cheap and eaſie rate. Therefore God in his infinite Wiſdom, that he might ſhew his extream hatred of all Sin and Evil, and the moſt powerfully wind off Men from it, he takes this way, *viz.* That his only begotten Son ſhould offer up

his Life for the Redemption of the World, and that his Death ſhould be an Expiatory Sacrifice for all Mens Sins.

Whereby God both diſcovers to us the ugly and polluted nature of Sin, and his juſt Diſpleaſure againſt it, in that ſtrange way he has taken to puniſh it by the Death and Paſſion of his only begotten Son; And withal, takes away all jealous and miſgiving Thoughts out of our Minds, and quiets our Conſciences, by ſhewing that he is no Adamantine and Rocky, no Implacable and Inexorable Being, that is for ever deaf to the pitious Complaints of the miſerable and Calamitous, but will take us again into Grace and Favour upon our Submiſſion and Repentance.

More-

Moreover, in this Sacrifice of the Death of Chriſt, there was a manifeſt condeſcenſion and purpoſed compliance with that early Perſuaſion ſo univerſally rooted in the Minds of all Nations of the World, That the offended *Numen* was only to be appeaſed by Sacrifice. And this was the Reaſon the *Gauls* gave for their Sacrificing of Men; *Pro vitâ hominum niſi vita hominis reddatur, non poſſe Deorum Immortalium Numen placari arbitrabantur*: i. e. They thought the Anger of God could not otherwiſe be averted, unleſs the Life of ſome Man were offered as a *Piacular* Sacrifice for the ſafety of the reſt. Now our Lord, by his Death, extricated Men from this inſulting Pride and Cruelty of the Devil, in his barbarous Uſage and infinite Contempt of humane Race; and the ſheding of his Blood be- Cæſar. Comment.

came a real Propitiatory Sacrifice, to appeaſe the Anger of God, and to obtain Terms of Reconciliation and Peace with him for all his lapſed Brethren.

4. It is highly reaſonable that this Preacher of Righteouſneſs, the Perſon who ſhould undertake to bring back the ſtrayed Souls of Men to their Obedience to God, ſhould have all Power committed into his hands both in Heaven and Earth. For ſince he humbled himſelf ſo far as to take upon him the form of a Servant, and vilifi'd his own Life in compariſon of that great benefit that would accrue to the World by his laying it down, and ſubmitted to the ignominious and accurſed Death of the Croſs, Divine Juſtice was concerned to Reward theſe Exinanitions with a proportionable Glory. And that he might be

be inſtated in a capacity to Reward his faithful Friends and Adherents, and Puniſh his refractary and ſtubborn Enemies, it became neceſſary that he ſhould have the Government of Heaven and Earth put into his hands. For this is a great Security to us, That our Lord is able to make good whatever he has promiſed to his Servants, and a powerful Encouragement to us to perſevere and go on to the end in Vertue, though we paſs through many Troubles and Afflictions. And being thus made God's Vicegerent, we cannot doubt but he will order all Affairs of the World for the good of his Church, and at laſt remarkably Triumph over all the Powers of Darkneſs.

You ſee now the reaſonableneſs and becomingneſs of the Frame of Religion, and how ſuitable and agreeable it is to our Capacities and

and Neceſſities. All which, when St. *Paul* had conſidered, he breaks out into a kind of Admiration, *Rom.* 11. 33. *O the depth of the Riches both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his Judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!* God being an infinite Wiſdom, has various ways and methods of Governing and Ordering his Creatures far above our ſhallow Comprehenſions; But the way of recovering Men is that which he has made choice of, and diſcovered to us by Jeſus Chriſt, in which there are ſuch eaſie compliances with thoſe inveterate Prejudices the World laboured under, and ſuch apt Condeſcentions to Humane Nature, as when the whole Frame and Contexture is laid open to an entire view, we cannot wonder that the Angels deſire to look into it.

Which

Which plainly ſhews, that Religion is no confuſed Jumble or Nonſence, but a Contrivance wherein appears the greateſt Art and higheſt Wiſdom in the World. And if all ſober Perſons admire the infinite Wiſdom of God in the Works of Nature, as the creation of the Sun, Moon, and Stars; they have much more reaſon to ſtand amazed at this great Work of the New Creation, or recovery of Mens Souls to their firſt and Original Happineſs. And if we can give a ſatisfactory Account of the Order and Management of the ſeveral *Phænomena* of Providence in the natural World, ſo in like manner there is a very reaſonable Defence to be made for the Contrivance and Conduct of Affairs in the Moral.

A DE-

A DEFENCE OF *Revealed Religion.*

SERMON III.

ROM. I. 16.

For I am not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt ——

THat there is no unreaſonableneſs in the Frame and Compoſition of Chriſtianity, but that it is infinitely agreeable and ſuitable to our Caſe and Neceſſities, we have clearly demonſtrated: It remains now that we ſhow with the ſame Plainneſs,

neſs, that there is nothing diſagreeing with ſound Reaſon in the Doctrines contained in it, that ſo we may ſee that upon neither of theſe two Accounts we have any cauſe to be aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt.

The Doctrines of Chriſtianity conſiſt either,

1. Of ſuch things as are to be believed as Articles of Faith. Or,

2. Of ſuch things as are commanded as Duties and Matters of our Practice. Or,

3. Of Promiſes of great Rewards to them that ſhall be Obedient, and ſevere Puniſhments and Threatnings to the Stubborn and Rebellious, who refuſe to walk according to thoſe Rules laid down in the Goſpel.

As to the Articles of Faith, we ſhall briefly run over ſome of the chief of them, that it may appear how

how conſonant they are to the light of our own Reaſons and Underſtandings.

That our bleſſed Saviour ſhould be born in an unuſual and extraordinary manner of a pure and immaculate Virgin; that there ſhould be an Apparition of Angels at his Birth; that the Wiſe Men of the *Eaſt* ſhould have notice and come to ſee him, are all things ſo highly becoming, that we ſhould wonder if the ſame, or ſomething like them, had not been done. For our Lord being to be the greateſt Perſon that ever appeared in the World, and being deſigned to be the faireſt Copy of a Holy and Pure Life, and to correct all the carnal Exorbitances and Corporeal Impurities in which Mankind wallowed, as if their only Felicity had conſiſted in the higheſt and rankeſt Exerciſe of their Ani-

Animal Powers, it was very agreeable that his Birth ſhould be different from the common manner. And that he ſhould have no other Father but God, was a way very ſuitable to gain a greater Authority to thoſe Holy Precepts that he ſhould deliver to the World; this being the univerſal Sence of Mankind, that there is the greateſt Reverence due to what any Perſon nearly related to God communicates. And that the Angels ſhould uſher in his wonderful Nativity with a ſolemn Anthem, is no more than what ſerved to enhance and ſet forth the Eminency, Value, and Dignity of his Perſon, who was to be the great Prince of Angels as well as Men; and in that Chriſt was deſigned to be the Hope of all the ends of the Earth, and the Perſon in whom the Gentiles ſhould truſt, though the *Magi* or Wiſe-

Men

Men intended no ſuch thing, yet it may well ſeem a Prefiguration of that chearful Submiſſion the Gentile World ſhould yield to him as their Prince and Redeemer, ſo ſoon as he ſhould come to be manifeſted to them.

And that Chriſt ſhould appear in the World like one of us, Clōathed with Fleſh and Blood, is more ſuitable to our State and Condition, than if God ſhould ſpeak by an Angel, or a Voice from Heaven. For ſince many Troubles, Afflictions, and Tribulations attend us in our way to Immortality, it cannot but be a greater encouragement to us to bear them with Patience, when we ſee our moſt Holy and Innocent Lord ſuffer a World of Reproaches and Indignities, and much hard uſage before he entred into his Glory. Nor is it any more unbecoming

or unworthy the Majesty of God to unite himself with a Humane Body, which his own *hands have fashioned*, and which is *fearfully and wonderfully made*, than it was for the Divine Presence to take up its Residence in the Jewish Temple, and dwell in a House of Stone.

Lastly, That Jesus Christ should be made the visible Judge of Men and Angels, is no less congruous and rational.

1. In respect of himself, this Honour and Triumph of the Divine Life being a just Reward of his voluntary Sufferings and Humiliation; which is the Account our Saviour Christ gives himself, *John* 5. 27. *And hath given him Authority to execute Judgment also, because he is the Son of Man.* That is, because he humbled himself to so high a degree as not only to take upon him our Flesh and Blood with all its

its harmleſs Infirmities and Imperfections, but endured with wonderful Patience the Contradictions of Sinners, the opprobrious Tauntings and Revilings of a Rude Generation, and ſubmitted himſelf at laſt to a Death full of Pain, Ignominy and Diſgrace.

2. In regard of wicked Men and Devils; For this viſible Appearance of Jeſus Chriſt in ſo ſolemn a manner, attended with innumerable Legions of mighty Angels, deſcending into theſe lower Regions near the Earth, the Glory of whoſe Preſence will be conſpicuous to all the World, muſt needs be a very ſenſible Conviction to all Wicked Perſons of the Folly of their Doings, when they ſhall ſee the ſame Jeſus that delivered the Will of God to them, now come to call them to an account for not obeying it. And ſince there may be,

and doubtleſs are many Scoffing, Atheiſtical Spirits in the Aerial Regions as well as here on Earth, who aſcribe all great Mutations in the World to Chance and Fortune, or the neceſſary Combinations of Matter, this appearance of our Lord and Saviour in ſuch a viſible manner, according to the ſure Predictions of the Holy Scriptures, will effectually confute their vain Philoſophy, and force them even againſt their Wills to acknowledge the Interpoſition of a Divine Power and Providence. Neither will it be a leſs afflicting Abaſement of the inſulting Pride of that Old Serpent and his Rebellious Aſſociates, who ſo long Tyrannized over Mankind with ſuch Contempt and Scorn, to feel themſelves caſt down into everlaſting Deſtruction by that Nature which they had ſo much vilified and abuſed.

3. In

3. In reſpect of thoſe who have been faithful Adherents of Chriſt Jeſus, and firmly perſiſted in Goodneſs, notwithſtanding the many diſcouragements they met withal, his Appearance in ſuch a ſenſible manner will be exceeding comfortable and joyful; for they beholding him coming down from Heaven with ſuch tranſcendent Power and Glory, muſt needs overflow with tranſports of Joy, to find that now their Redemption will be fully compleated: For what may not they hope for at his hands, who is both their merciful Redeemer and their Judge? And this very ſight of their long-expected Saviour, will invigorate their Souls with ſuch a high degree of Life, as ſhall, through the inward Operation of the Divine Spirit, tranſform their vile Bodies into the ſimilitude of the glorious Body of

the Son of God; and in these fiery Chariots like *Elijah*, they shall ascend from these mortal Regions to augment the Train of this great and Almighty Judge. So every way agreeable are the Articles of our Christian Faith.

2. We come now to the second Part of the Doctrines of Christianity, which consists of such things as are commanded as Duties and matters of our Practice. Which are only a reviving the natural Inscriptions and Laws of Righteousness Engraven upon our Souls at their first Creation. For it cannot be thought but that that long Degeneracy we lay under, and the powerful and vigorous growth of our Animal Faculties must exceedingly impair, if not wholly obliterate the fair Impresses of the Divine Nature upon us, so that we have need to have all those

thoſe eternal Rules of Righteouſneſs and Holineſs to be laid down to us afreſh. And the manifeſtation of the Duties and Obligations that Chriſtianity lays upon us, is the exſuſcitating and raiſing up that decaying, and almoſt dying ſpark of Divine Life yet left in us, and which may gain ſuch ſtrength by the powerful energy of the Spirit of Chriſt, as to conſume or convert into its Nature all that Rubbiſh which hindred and obſtructed it. And according to theſe Meaſures the Commands and Laws of Chriſtianity are framed, ſo that they are a part of the ancient Intellectual Furniture of our own Souls. For ſurely, there can be nothing more natural and conſiſtent with our rational Frame, than to Love and Honour God, from whoſe infinite Fulneſs, we and all things, received their Being,

with all our Hearts, and with all our Strength: To depend upon him for all our Supplies, and to acknowledge our own Nothingneſs, that all that we have proceeds and flows from his inexhauſted Bounty: To ſit quiet and contented under the various Diſpenſations of his Providence, and to bring our Minds into a Subordination and perfect Conformity to his Holy Will in all things.

And as Chriſtianity enjoyns us to pay all Duty, and Service, and Obedience to God, ſo it ſtrictly Commands all manner of Juſtice and Righteouſneſs to others; forbidding all harm and wrong to any thing living, and inſtead of that, requiring every Man in his ſeveral Station and Capacity to do all that Good that at any time lies in his Power. To be kind and compaſſionate, forgetting and forgiving all

all manner of Injuries done unto us, and returning Good for the Evil that we have received.

Furthermore, Chriſtianity commands us to avoid all Lying and Hypocriſie, as things beneath the excellency and dignity of our Nature, and to ſpeak the Truth in ſincerity and ſingleneſs of Heart. To baniſh out of our Minds all Malignity, Rancour, Malice and Envy, as being the moſt contrary to the Nature of God, who delights in the Proſperity and Happineſs of his Creatures; and therefore the Soul of a Chriſtian above all others is enlarged and widened with an univerſal Love and Charity, readily undertaking the help and relief of the Neceſſitous and Indigent, looking upon all Mankind as Brethren, and thereby joying and delighting in the Felicity of the whole World.

Now

Now as to our ſelves, we are engaged by the Precepts of our Holy Religion, to exerciſe great Temperance and Moderation, Sobriety and Chaſtity, in reference to all Corporeal Satisfactions and Delights: Not to defile and pollute our ſelves with debauched and ſenſual Pleaſures, but to remember that our Souls once came from the pure and incorruptible Manſions of Heaven, and therefore, that it is very unbecoming to ſuffer them to wallow and tumble in the Dirt and Mire of the Earth. And ſince we are of a Divine Extraction, Religion puts us in Mind to behave our ſelves as Citizens of that Heavenly Country, and to releaſe and withdraw our Affections from this World, and to think of our return thither from whence we have ſo long baniſhed our ſelves. For certainly nothing ſo much effe-

minates,

minates, debaſes, and ſhrivels up the Mind of Man, as Covétouſneſs and a ſordid purſuit of Riches, rendring it unfit for any Noble and Generous Action, and is really the moſt deſpicable Drudgery and Slavery that any one can fall under. It were endleſs to purſue every ſingle Vertue that is propounded and countenanced in the Rules of Chriſtianity; and therefore this may ſuffice to conclude this Head withal, that there is nothing that is truly Heroical and Divine, nothing that is Graceful and Lovely, and matter of good Report and Praiſe, but it is a part of the Duty of a Chriſtian.

And now we may ſafely appeal to the common underſtanding of all Men, whether any of theſe things are unreaſonable; or whether they are not rather adapted for the advancement of our Souls to their

their higheſt Perfection. Indeed, if we look upon every thing to be unreaſonable that goes croſs to our corrupt Luſts and Affections, and that any way contradicts our carnal and ſenſual Deſires, then Chriſtian Religion will be the moſt unreaſonable thing in the World. But this were to become brutiſh, and not to diſcern what is really the Advantage and Perfection of Humane Minds. For the denying the Cravings of our corrupt Appetites, and the dying to our Corporeal Affections, is the enlivening that better and diviner Part of us, and the aſſerting our ſelves into our true Liberty and Freedom.

3. The third Head under which we comprehended the Doctrines of Chriſtianity is, the Promiſes of great Rewards to all thoſe that ſincerely and conſcientiouſly obey the Goſpel; and ſevere Puniſh-

ments

ments threaten'd to the Stubborn and Refractory. We ſhall conſider both theſe Parts diſtinctly and ſeverally: I ſay therefore, That God ſhould annex Rewards to the Performance of his Commands, will appear very reaſonable and becoming, if not wholly neceſſary.

1. In regard of the Weakneſs of our State and Condition. For that long Degeneracy we lay in under Sin, had through conſtant exerciſe and continuance of Time, ſo vitiated and weakned our beſt Powers and Faculties, that we could never, by our own ſolitary endeavours recover our ſelves. And though Vertue be in it ſelf exceeding lovely and amiable, and attractive of the Hearts of all thoſe whoſe Eyes are in ſome good meaſure opened to diſcern the Beauty of it: Yet the generality of Men have

have the Eyes of their Minds ſo faſt cloſed, that the brightneſs and excellency of it can make no ſenſible Impreſſion upon them. Therefore it is not only very becoming that Evangelical Oeconomy God has ſet on Foot, but neceſſary that there ſhould be ſome further powerful encouragement made uſe of, than what is derived from the naked Contemplation of Vertue it ſelf. For if Vertue alone be ſo charming, it will be much more, when it comes accompanied with the ſecurity of Immortal Glory. And if ſome Men can make ſuch hopeful Beginnings, and overcome many Difficulties, and endure much Hardſhip for the Attainment of Vertue, (as many of the Poor Heathens did, meerly for Vertue's ſake, without any conſideration of Reward) ſurely there is none that can flinch or give back, when beſides

beſides the Pleaſure of the thing it ſelf, there is ſo ſtupendious a Reward annexed to it. So that in this God hath both conſulted the Weakneſſes and Neceſſities of Mankind, and taken ſuch a courſe as may render the Recovery of his own Nature in them to become effectual.

2. God hath ſo attempered things, that he hath left room ſufficient for Ingenuity to ſhow and exerciſe it ſelf; and they that Love God becauſe he hath propoſed a Reward, do yet in effect do it for the tranſcendent excellency of his Nature. Becauſe no Man can have a certain and aſſured Hope of this Reward, but it muſt flow from the conſideration of the infinite Goodneſs and Benignity of God diſplayed to the World. Therefore when God has propoſed a Reward to the Love of Ver-

Vertue, it doth not extinguiſh that natural Love which the Soul retains of ſo excellent an Object, but heightens and inflames it. The Reward ſerves as a Spur to quicken and ſharpen our Deſire and Contention after that which we apprehend has ſo much Pleaſure and Satisfaction in it.

3. Rewards are congruouſly enough annexed to the Laws and Commands of GOD, that Men might not look upon him as rigid and ſevere, but as a Being that truly deſires their Good and Well-being. For Vertue and Holineſs, and that new Nature that is required of us under the Goſpel, being every way ſo ungrateful to Fleſh and Blood, (as tending to the extirpation of all carnal Deſires) if there had been no Rewards propoſed, ſinful and unworthy Men would have had jealous and ſuſpicious thoughts of

of God, as if he had been either Severe and Tyrannical, or that Vertue and Goodneſs had not been a thing of that Value and Conſequence that now we ſee it is. But now, by propoſing ſo great a Reward, and making ſuch ample Promiſes to unfeigned Piety, it is a clear Evidence that he would have this to take effect, and that he is ready to promote it ſo far as may conſiſt with the Nature of Rational Creatures.

And as for the Commination of extremeſt Puniſhments to thoſe that forget God, it will appear no leſs reaſonable upon theſe two Accounts:

1. To uphold the Righteous Government of God in the World. For in that God is an infinite Purity and Holineſs, and has endued Men and Angels with ſuch a large Portion of this his

Nature, that nothing but their own perverſe Wills could diveſt them of this happy State, it is hard to conceive that GOD could, by any better way, manifeſt his hatred and Deteſtation of all Sin and Evil, than by expoſing it publickly to a deſerved Puniſhment. For ſhould this Pure and Holy Being never ſtep forth in a ſignal and remarkable manner to Puniſh Wickedneſs and Vice, bold and daring Sinners would conclude as formerly they have done, *Pſal.* 50. 21. *That God was altogether ſuch an one as themſelves*: That Sin and Evil were only Fantaſtick Things, and that GOD did not trouble himſelf with the Actions of Men. Such Thoughts as theſe caſt the higheſt reproach upon GOD and his Government and Providence in the World. And therefore he is in a very great manner concerned to vin-

vindicate the Juſtice and Righteouſneſs of his Proceedings, and to ſhew in ſome ſolemn way his Hatred and Indignation of all Iniquity. To which we may add, that the Nature of Men and Angels is ſo framed as muſt neceſſarily make them fit and capable Objects of God's diſtributive Juſtice. For there being ſuch a *Sui Poteſtas*, Liberty or Freedom in reference to their own Actions, eſſential to them, they will unavoidably be accountable to that Divine *Nemeſis*, which will never leave ſcourging and beating of Sin till it have driven it quite out of the World.

2. The threatning of ſevere Puniſhments is a ſtrong Curb and Reſtraint to keep Men off from thoſe Exorbitances which otherwiſe their corrupt Natures would lead them to, that they cannot be ſo wicked as they would be. For

fear and ſenſe of Pain, have a greater force upon our Minds in this Earthly State, than the ſtrongeſt and moſt refined Deductions of Reaſon. We cannot but ſee how weak and ineffectual thoſe Humane Laws are, which have no Puniſhment annexed for the Tranſgreſſors, and by how much the greater the Penalty is, by ſo much the more cautious it renders the Actions of Men. Now, as no Humane Laws do directly intend Puniſhment, ſo neither do the Laws of GOD, but this ſevere Penalty is added as a Fence and Security, and ſerves to fright Men out of the Arms of their Sins, and is a powerful Bar againſt the wild Excurſions of Fleſh and Blood.

Having now ſo fully manifeſted that Chriſtianity hath nothing unreaſonable in it, whether we look upon the Frame, and make of it

in

in General, or whether we reflect upon the Doctrines contained in it, we may draw ſome few Inferences from hence. As,

1. That every Chriſtian according to his Capacity ought to look upon it as his Duty to be able to give a Reaſon of his Faith. It is the Apoſtles advice, 1 *Pet.* 3. 15. *Be ready to give an Anſwer to every Man that asks you a Reaſon of the hope that is in you.* And again, 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 21. *Prove all things, hold faſt that which is good.* For ſince God hath ſo far complied with our Weakneſs, as to ſuit the whole buſineſs of Religion to our Meaſures and Capacities, and yet made all its Commands and Doctrines to bear ſo grateful and pleaſing a Harmony with our Rational Frame, he expects that we ſhould be able to ſay more for it, than a *Jew* for the *Moſaical Law*, or a

Turk for the *Alcoran*, or a *Pagan* for his ancient *Superſtition*. And yet ſo ſupinely negligent are the greateſt part of thoſe that profeſs Chriſtianity, that they can give no better Account why they are Chriſtians, than that it is the Religion which their Forefathers lived and died in; or becauſe it is that which by Law is eſtabliſhed amongſt them, and they have been trained up from their Infancy in ſuch a Perſuaſion; which is no more than what multitudes of the greateſt Hereticks have had to plead for themſelves. Whereas Chriſtian Religion bearing in its Face the evident Marks and Characters of the eternal Reaſon, muſt ſurely admit of a better Apology. And the great cauſe why we do not diſcern the beauty and agreeableneſs of it, muſt be attributed to our Slothfulneſs and Negligence, and to the

pre-

prevalency of thoſe naughty Affections that we ſuffer to lead us about. For it is certain, that a Mind that is puffed up with Pride and Vain-glory, that is filled with the Thoughts of the World and Earthly Vanities, that is ſunk down and drowned in bodily Pleaſures, is in no fitter Diſpoſition to make a Judgment of Religion, than a Blind Man to difference and diſtinguiſh Colours.

2. From hence we ſee, That God does not require us to believe without giving us good Grounds and Reaſons. For God in the ſtructure of Chriſtianity adapting it ſo far to the Imbecility and Imperfection of our Nature, and taking all poſſible care for our Satisfaction, that we may not believe blindfold without enquiring or asking a Reaſon, it is a ſure ſign that he would have us make

uſe of thoſe Faculties that he has given us. And moreover, the great Cognation there is between the Laws of Religion and the Primitive Inſcriptions of our Souls, puts us out of all doubt that they are not the Effects and Reſults of mere Arbitrarious Will, but the Products of immutable and eternal Wiſdom. Wherefore, as GOD has given us our bodily Eyes to ſecure us from harm and danger, and to direct us in the ſeveral Actions of our Lives; ſo has he given us our Reaſons and Underſtandings to perform the ſame Offices for our Souls, that our Eyes do for our Bodies.

3. Laſtly, There is no Man can deſpiſe and undervalue the Goſpel, but he muſt be given over to a Prophane and Atheiſtical Spirit. For ſince there appears ſuch ſignal Notices and characteriſtical Marks

Marks of Divinity all along in the Scriptures, and that there is ſuch a thing as Juſtice and Injuſtice, Truth and Falſhood, antecedent to all Poſitive Laws whatever, and theſe Notions engraven at their firſt Creation upon the Souls of Men, it muſt neceſſarily argue a ſtrange Diſeaſe and Diſtemper of Mind to contradict thoſe things which are ſo ſymmetrical and agreeable with their intellectual Frame. I confeſs there are ſome who, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks of the *Gentiles* or *Pagans*, *Rom.* 1. 18. do, τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατέχειν, unjuſtly detain and impriſon the Truth; that whereas their natural Faculties ſuggeſt to them the Being of a God, and that this All-perfect Being can communicate his Will and Pleaſure to us Mortals, yet will rather ſtupifie, beſot, and bedead the choiceſt Powers of their Souls, than ſuffer them

them to entertain a Truth ſo uncomplying with their carnal Luſts and Affections. And this the ſame Apoſtle expreſſes in another place, 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 10. *By not receiving the Love of the Truth, i.e.* not carrying ſuch a pliable, ductile and ſequacious Temper of Mind, as ought to receive and embrace what is ſo congenerous with it ſelf. And nothing ſooner throws the Soul into this forced and preternatural State wherein it loſes that *Criterion* that ſhould diſtinguiſh between Good and Evil, Truth and Falſhood, than Senſuality, and the love of the Animal Life. For this petrefies, ſtiffneth, and makes the Mind ſo inſenſible and obdurate, as not to be rouzed up and awakened with the Voice of Thunder. Wherefore when Religion is made ſo fully unexceptionable, to deride and ſcoff at it as a mean, jejune,

june, and contemptible Thing a-gainſt all the Sence and Reaſon that ever Mankind was endued withal, is as horrid a piece of Impiety as any one can be guilty of; and will at laſt lead to the uncomfortable Chambers of eternal Deſtruction.

A DE-

A DEFENCE OF *Revealed Religion.*

SERMON IV.

ROM. I. 16.

For I am not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt ——

WE have taken away (in what has been already diſcourſed from theſe Words) the two firſt Cauſes or Grounds which may induce a Man to be aſhamed of any Matter or Doctrine propounded to gain belief to it. And they were,

were, if it were neither true nor reaſonable.

3. The third is, if it be not intelligible, *i. e.* if it be not delivered in ſuch plain and eaſie terms as that thoſe to whom it is delivered may underſtand it. Now, as to this Particular, we ſhall lay down this concluſion. *That Chriſtian Religion, ſo far as concerns the Salvation of Mankind, is ſo plain and open, that the moſt mean and vulgar ſort may underſtand it.* And this we ſhall prove not only very reaſonable that it ſhould be ſo, but abſolutely neceſſary and could not be otherwiſe. And that upon theſe Accounts.

1. Chriſtianity was given to be the Religion of all Men, not only of Philoſophers and Stateſmen, but of the meaneſt and moſt unlearned Perſons in the World. Now that which was deſigned for ſo univerſal

ſal a Good and Benefit as that of the whole Race of Men, of what Rank, or Quality, or Condition ſoever they were, muſt of neceſſity be ſo contrived, that it may be underſtood of all. For the Will can never cloſe with, receive, or embrace that which the Underſtanding has no apprehenſion or knowledge of. If the Apoſtles, when they firſt Preached the Goſpel, had told the People ſuch high and myſterious things as their ſhallow Capacities could frame no Intelligible Idea's of, they might as well have ſpoken in an unknown Language, and that doubtleſs would have done their Auditors but little good. But ſince the far more numerous part of the World were Perſons of no great depth of Underſtanding, Religion ought principally to be fitted for them, and conſequently muſt be made very

eaſie

eaſie to be underſtood in all thoſe things that were abſolutely neceſſary to their Salvation, otherwiſe it would be of no benefit to them. Our Lord and Saviour tells St. *Paul*, *Acts* 26. 18. that he ſent him *to open Mens Eyes*, that is, to inform their *Underſtandings*, *and to turn them from Darkneſs to Light*, *and from the Power of Satan unto God.* But which way ſhould the Apoſtle do this? It muſt be by plainneſs of Speech, and by ſuiting his Arguments to the common Apprehenſion of them that heard him. For an Argument that a Man does not underſtand can no more prevail upon him, than *Sampſon*'s Riddle could feed the Philiſtines with Honey.

2. Chriſtian Religion has the Nature of a Covenant, and is often called ſo; therefore the Terms of which it conſiſts, ought to be ſo plain,

plain, as that every one concerned in it may underſtand them. Now a Covenant (as every one knows) is a mutual Compact or Agreement, wherein each Party obliges himſelf to the Performance of ſomething: Thus in this new Covenant of the Goſpel, GOD engages to beſtow on Men many great and ineſtimable Bleſſings and Benefits, and we promiſe to be obedient to his Commands, and to walk up ſincerely to that which he has made the Condition of our Salvation. But now, how ſhall we come to know either what the Bleſſings are which GOD intends to beſtow upon us, or what the Duties to which we are obliged, and which are the Terms on our ſide to perform, unleſs they are plainly and perſpicuouſly ſet forth to the common Underſtanding of Men? All the World is concerned in this Cove-

nant, and therefore Reaſon tells us, that all the World muſt underſtand what it is, and embrace it, and receive a benefit by it, if it be not their own Fault. And hence we underſtand the meaning of thoſe words of the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 10. 6, 7, 8. *Say not in thine Heart, who ſhall aſcend up into Heaven, that is, to bring Chriſt down from above? Or who ſhall deſcend into the deep, to bring up Chriſt again from the Dead? For the Word is nigh thee in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart.*—— The Apoſtle here tells us, that there is no Reaſon why a Chriſtian ſhould imagine that GOD propounds to him ſuch Conditions as are impoſſible for him to perform; (for the *aſcending into Heaven*, and *deſcending into the Deep*, is a Proverbial Speech, and uſed to ſignifie a thing extreamly hard and difficult;) For in that Chriſt came from

from Heaven, and roſe from the Dead without any aſſiſtance or help of ours, by the ſole Power and Virtue of his Divinity, it is a manifeſt ſign that we are not tyed to Impoſſibilities, nor are the terms of our Salvation intricate and unintelligible: But (as it follows) *the Word is nigh thee in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart*: *i. e.* the way of Salvation, or the Chriſtian Religion is plain and obvious to all Capacities to obſerve and Practiſe.

3. Every Man ſhall be accountable hereafter for his Obedience or Diſobedience to the Laws of the Goſpel; which he could not be, if they were ſo obſcure and dark, as that he could have no Apprehenſion or underſtanding of them. If a Law were made in ſuch ambiguous, dark, and perplexed Terms, that an ordinary Capacity

could not underſtand its Sence and Meaning, it were impoſſible to know when he obeyed, or when he tranſgreſſed: And ſuch a Law would either be to no purpoſe, or elſe made with a deſign to enſnare Men; which can by no means be attributed to God, who is infinite Wiſdom and infinite Equity. God ſent his Son into the World to publiſh and declare his Will, and he having ſo much kindneſs for Men as to die for them, we may be ſure would not fail in repreſenting it ſo clearly, as that none ſhould have any reaſon to complain that it was hid from him.

4. If Religion had been unintelligible, it would perfectly have loſt its end and deſign, which was to recover Men from a ſtate of Sin to a ſtate of Righteouſneſs. For, Can a Man be perſwaded by that which

which he does not underſtand? Or ſhall a Myſtery wrapt up in thick Clouds and Darkneſs, on purpoſe that it may be unintelligible, make any one ever the wiſer? The Apoſtle St. *Paul* ſpeaking of the State of the Goſpel, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. uſes this Expreſſion, *We all with open face beholding as in a Glaſs, the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame Image from Glory to Glory.* The full meaning of which words is this, The Goſpel is not like the Law, which when *Moſes* brought down from the Mount, he put a Veil upon his Face, there being abundance of Rites and Ceremonies, and Types relating to our Saviour Chriſt, which the common People underſtood nothing of: But Chriſtianity is open and plain, having no ſhadows to darken and obſcure, and we looking into this and ſeeing the Glory

of it as perfectly as we can ſee our Faces in a Glaſs, are by little and little, and long looking upon it, changed and transformed into the ſame Image and Likeneſs. Now this is ſpoken in reference to the Plainneſs and Perſpicuity of Religion, which would loſe the deſign and purpoſe for which it was given, if it had been ſo obſcure that we could have no conception or meaning of it. For can any Man in his Wits believe that he can be changed and transformed by a Contrivance or Diſcourſe that he is wholly ignorant of? And St. *John* aſſures us, 1 *Joh.* 1. 5. *That God is Light, and in him is no Darkneſs at all*: *i. e.* The manifeſtation of God's Will is plain and open, no obſcurity of Shadows or Types and Figures, but eaſie and intelligible to all, ſo far as concerns their eternal Salvation. By which

it

it is very evident, that Religion in all things neceſſary to bring the World to everlaſting Bleſſedneſs, is a thing that does not tranſcend the meaneſt Capacity.

But here I foreſee there are ſome no inconſiderable Objections which ſeem to undermine and invalidate what has hitherto been diſcourſed, and theſe being removed and taken out of the way, I ſhall conclude this particular.

Object. 1. It may here be ſaid, If the Goſpel, *i. e.* Chriſtian Religion be ſo plain and fitted to the meaneſt Capacity, why is it then called a Myſtery? Now a Myſtery is a ſacred and hidden Piece of Wiſdom, containing under it ſome great and excellent Truth, and ſuch is the Goſpel, which the Apoſtle calls, *Eph.* 3. 4, 5. *The Myſtery of Chriſt, which in other Ages was not*

made known to the Sons of Men, as it is now revealed unto his Holy Apoſtles and Prophets by the Spirit. And again, *Coloſſ.* 1. 26. It is called the *Myſtery which was hid from Ages and Generations, but now is made manifeſt to the Saints.* Now if (as we ſee the Apoſtle tells us) the Goſpel be ſuch a Myſterious thing, how comes it to be ſo plain and obvious (as we have ſaid) to every vulgar Capacity?

In anſwer to this, we muſt conſider that Chriſtian Religion is indeed a Myſtery, and it is deſervedly called ſo by the Apoſtle; but yet notwithſtanding, this does not hinder, but that it is plain and open in all things neceſſary to Salvation. We ſhall therefore firſt ſhew the Reaſons why it is called a Myſtery, and that it is very requiſite it ſhould be ſo, *i. e.* that there ſhould be ſomething hidden and

and reſerved in it, that ſhould not preſently be diſcerned by every oſcitant and careleſs Perſon; and then make it appear further, that it is not difficult to be underſtood in thoſe things that are abſolutely neceſſary to every Chriſtian's Salvation.

Now, beſides that, the Apoſtle expreſly affirms Chriſtianity to be a Myſtery, there are many Inſtances which prove it to be ſo. There are many Doctrines which are very obſcure and difficult to be underſtood, ſuch as the Divinity of our Saviour, the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity; nay, the very Reſurrection of our Bodies is termed a Myſtery, as containing ſomething above common and vulgar conceits and apprehenſions. And when we reflect upon the different Sentiments and Perſwaſions of Men about theſe things, it will fully

fully evince ſome obſcurity in Religion, and that it is not every where of the ſame make, but has ſome unfathomable Depths, as well as ſhallows that are eaſie and obvious to be Forded, and underſtood by a mean and ordinary Capacity. For it is impoſſible that ever ſo many Diviſions about the Doctrines of Religion, ſo many Sects of different Perſwaſions ſhould have ariſen, and ſo long troubled and vexed the Chriſtian Church, if all things had been at firſt ſight plain and intelligible to every one. Not to mention the many Prophecies uttered in the Holy Scriptures, which are no otherwiſe known but by their events and fulfilling, and till then Men make but uncertain Gueſſes and Conjectures about them.

And that this obſcurity in ſome things of Religion is very becoming

ing the All-comprehenſive Wiſdom of God, appears to be very reaſonable,

1. To conciliate reverence and eſteem to Religion. Should God at once have laid open all the Pearls of the Goſpel to every Carnal Eye, they would have been apt to have contemned and deſpiſed them, ſince it is the common guiſe and faſhion of the World, to eſteem that of little worth and value, that coſts no Labour and Pains to come at: Whereas they apprehend ſomething more than ordinary, ſome great matter to be contained in that which is wrapt up, and kept ſecret and reſerved from common ſight. Therefore that this great Gift of God might not prove deſpicable and contemptible, he is pleaſed to Veil it in a good meaſure, that Men might not know the worth of

of it at once, but that the more they look into it, the more they ſhould admire the unvaluableneſs and richneſs of it. It is recorded of ſome of the Kings of *Perſia*, that they ſhewed themſelves to their Subjects but once a Year, that they might be more reverenced and adored, when they offered themſelves to the People's View. And GOD, that he might gain more Reverence and Eſtimation to this infinite Treaſure wherewith he hath enriched the World, he keeps a great part of it hidden, and is not won without many Prayers and earneſt Importunities, accompanied with great diligence to ſhew unto Men the glorious Beauty of it.

2. It is very becoming that ſome things in Religion ſhould be obſcure, and that there ſhould be ſome high and raiſed Truths above the

the level of common Underſtandings, that ſo all Holy Perſons might find matter of Delight and Satisfaction, according to their ſeveral ſtatures and growth in Grace. Hence St. *John* 1 *Ep.* 1. 13. ſpeaks of *Little Children, and Young Men, and Fathers* in Religion; and according to this their ſeveral growth and ſtature in Chriſt Jeſus, there muſt likewiſe be a difference in the Meat or Food they are nouriſhed withal. A Man is not contented with that which will nouriſh an Infant, but requires ſtronger Meat. Therefore St. *Paul* rightly diſtinguiſheth of this, *Heb.* 5. 12, 13, 14. *For when for the time ye ought to be Teachers, ye have need that one Teach you again, which be the firſt Principles of the Oracles of God, and are become ſuch as have need of Milk, and not of ſtrong Meat. For every one that uſeth Milk is unskilful in the Word*

of

of Righteouſneſs; for he is a Babe: But ſtrong Meat belongs to them that are of full Age —— Now, that the Goſpel may be fitted for all theſe ſorts of Perſons, it is neceſſary that it ſhould be furniſhed with ſuch things as are plain, and which may be delivered in a Catechetical way, as things abſolutely neceſſary to the Salvation of every one; and then that it ſhould be ſtored with higher and more raiſed Doctrines for the gratification of them that are of full Age in Chriſt, who, by reaſon of their growth in the Divine Life, *have their Senſes exerciſed to diſcern both Good and Evil.* And accordingly the Apoſtle, when he lays down the Characters of a Biſhop, ſays, 1 *Tim.* 3. 6. that he muſt not be νεόφυτος *a Novice, i. e.* one that only knows the firſt Rudiments of Religion, but is not able to pierce into the depths of it.

3. That

3. That there ſhould be ſome difficulty in Religion is but reaſonable to exerciſe Mens diligence in ſearching after theſe hidden Treaſures of Wiſdom. For 'tis not to the Careleſs, Oſcitant Perſon, but to the Diligent and Inquiſitive that GOD has promiſed an increaſe of Wiſdom. He that would attain to Divine Knowledge muſt *ſeek her as Silver, and ſearch after her as for hid Treaſures*, as *Solomon* long ſince adviſed, *Prov.* 2. 4. And our bleſſed Saviour in a Parable, *Mat.* 13. 45, 46. *Likens the Kingdom of Heaven to a Merchant-Man, ſeeking goodly Pearls; who, when he had found one Pearl of great Price, he went and Sold all that he had and bought it.* All theſe things denote our diligent ſearch and careful enquiry after Wiſdom. Now GOD, that he might gratifie the innocent deſires of Men after Knowledge, and like-

likewiſe reward their Pains and Labour in ſearching after it, he opens and diſcovers to them ſuch Treaſures as are concealed from wicked and careleſs Perſons.

4. And laſtly, It ſeems reaſonable that there ſhould be ſome choice Pieces of Wiſdom and Knowledge reſerved to exerciſe Mens Minds upon, even in the very concluſion and laſt Age of the World. As Nature has hid many curious Secrets and great Treaſures in the Bowels of the Earth, whereby ſhe might have ſomething to imploy Mens Diligence upon, even to the end of the World; ſo GOD has covered many Pieces of excellent Wiſdom in the Body of the Scriptures, that he might ſtill have ſome new thing to offer, ſome Treaſures not yet known to diſcover to all the Generations of Men, till the Time come

come that they ſhall know as they are known.

You ſee now in what Sence Religion may be ſaid to be ſomewhat dark and obſcure, and that there are great Reaſons for it. And yet notwithſtanding, it is very plain and eaſie to the moſt ordinary Capacity in all things abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation. So that he that believes the Apoſtles Creed, and leads a good Life according to the plain Commands of God in the Holy Scriptures, he does all that which is required as abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation, and if it be not his own Fault, ſhall undoubtedly be ſaved. For whatever relates to the true and right honouring of God, and his only begotten Son Jeſus Chriſt, and to the Duties of Righteouſneſs and Juſtice to one another, is very clearly laid down in the ſacred

Scriptures, ſo that there can be no miſtake about it. And for thoſe things that are difficult and tranſcend common Apprehenſions, it is enough for a Man to believe them to be the Revelations of God, though he do not underſtand the ſence and meaning of them; provided that he be faithful in the diſcharge of all thoſe Duties which are ſuited and fitted to the Capacity of every Chriſtian, and which none can be ignorant of. But though this be enough to ſave a Man, yet there is no Perſon that has means and opportunities of encreaſing in Wiſdom and Knowledge, but (if he neglect them) he ſhall be accountable to God for this his neglect. *For to whom much is given, of him ſhall much be required.* Therefore, if we may grow wiſer in Heavenly Wiſdom and Underſtanding, and

ſhall

ſhall waſte thoſe precious Opportunities upon any thing elſe of leſſer Moment and Concernment, this Careleſneſs will highly be charged upon us. No Man is to ſtand at a ſtay, but to improve himſelf in the Knowledge of Chriſt, according to the Opportunities and Ability that GOD has given him, ſo that no Man has any Time or Pains to Spare, though GOD have made every private Chriſtian's Duty ſo clear.

Object. 2. To this that hath been ſaid of the Plainneſs and Perſpicuity of Religion, it may further be objected after this manner, That if it be ſo plain and clear in all thoſe things that are requiſite and neceſſary to bring a Chriſtian to Heaven, then what need have we of Preaching?

Anſw. To this *Objection* we may reply, that ſince this hath been made uſe of by our Adverſaries, as an Artifice to draw off and diſſettle unſtable Minds from the true Religion; yet if there be any validity in it, it makes as much againſt them as it doth againſt us; there being no Sect or Party, or Religious Society whatever, but hath ſome Perſons ſet apart to preſide over and Miniſter in Religious Offices to thoſe of the ſame Bond and Communion. But we ſhall not content our ſelves with this, but more fully ſhow, That though all things neceſſary for the Salvation of every private Chriſtian be fully and plainly laid down, ſo that there can be no miſtake, yet a ſettled Miniſtry (as the caſe of things ſtands) is not only needful, but cannot be laid aſide. And that for theſe Reaſons,

1. There

1. There are many weak and doubting Conſciences amongſt Chriſtians which will want Reſolution; many that are troubled and caſt down that will ſtand in need of Advice and Comfort. Now this makes one great part of the work of him that is appointed for the Conduct of Souls, *to comfort the feeble minded, and to ſupport the weak.* And though this may be in ſome meaſure the duty of all Chriſtians to one another, yet more eſpecially of him who is deſigned and ſet apart to miniſter to the needs and neceſſities of Souls. Moreover, we ſee how vigilant and induſtrious the grand Enemy of Mankind is, in ſtriving by his Agents and Inſtruments to ſubvert the Faith of ſuch as are not well grounded, by drawing them into Schiſms, Factions, and Hereſies, which would be in a great mea-

ſure prevented, if Men would conſult their ſpiritual Guides, whoſe Office it is to Teach and to Inſtruct them. Therefore, ſo long as theſe Needs and Neceſſities of Men continue, that is, of ſuch as are weak, who will want Counſel and Advice; of ſuch as are doubtful, who will need Reſolution, ſo long there will be a neceſſity of an eſtabliſhed Miniſtry. For to whom can Men better repair than to thoſe that are ſet over them, whoſe conſcientious Faithfulneſs may render them fit to be truſted, and whoſe skill and ability in Learning and Knowledge may make them able both to inſtruct the Ignorant and convince Gainſayers?

2. We cannot but ſee how eaſily Men are drawn into Sin, and how prone they are naturally to Vice, notwithſtanding the conſtant Admonitions, and frequent Inſtructi-

ſtructions given them, and that great care that is taken to keep them out of the Snares of the Devil; and we cannot but take notice, how little all this prevails upon them, and that yet Sin and Evil is too apt to get ground and make advances. What then can we imagine would be the event and conſequence, if all theſe things were laid aſide? If they are hardly now kept in the due fear and reverence of GOD by the moſt faithful and ſtrong Exhortations to Piety and Vertue, there can nothing elſe be expected but that a Deluge of Wickedneſs ſhould overflow the World, when theſe Banks that ſtopped it are broken down, and all reſtraints removed, and Men left only to the guidance of their unruly Luſts and Paſſions. This muſt neceſſarily be the State of Things, if there were no ſettled

Miniſtry among us; and therefore the continuance of it is not only highly beneficial, but there ſeems a preſſing neceſſity for it, though our Duty be ſo plain, and all things abſolutely required to particular Mens Salvation be ſo clear and manifeſt.

Object. 3. It may yet further be objected, If the neceſſary things of Religion be ſo plain, how come Men to walk ſo contrary to it? And why has it ſo little effect in the World? One would think that thoſe ſtupendious Promiſes of the Forgiveneſs of our Sins, of the aſſiſtance of God's Spirit, and of everlaſting Joys in the Kingdom of Heaven, ſhould be enough to quicken Mens Diligence, to enliven their dull and heavy Minds, and put them upon earneſt Reſolutions and Endeavours to walk conſtantly

in

in thoſe Paths that lead to ſo deſirable a Happineſs. By what means then comes it to paſs, that the World is no fuller of true and ſincere Chriſtians?

Anſw. It is true indeed, and muſt be confeſs'd with all ſadneſs of Heart, that notwithſtanding our Duty is ſo clear and manifeſt, and that the Summ of Religion (like the Prophet's Viſion, *Hab.* 2. 2.) is written in ſuch legible Characters that he that runs may read it, yet it hath not had that due effect upon the Hearts and Lives of Men as it ought to have. And although the unſucceſsfulneſs of Religion may be reſolved into many and different Cauſes, yet I ſhall only inſtance in ſome which are moſt obvious and frequent: As,

1. Becauſe Men place their Religion in Opinions and Sects, in Words and Notions, more than in the

the everlaſting Rules of Righteouſneſs, Charity, Goodneſs and Truth. It cannot but be matter of Sorrow to every ſober and ſerious Chriſtian to ſee the Catholick Church rent into ſo many Pieces and Diviſions; one crying (as of old) I am of *Paul*; and another, I am of *Apollos*; and a third of *Cephas*, as if a Chriſtian were not Baptized into Chriſt Jeſus, but into ſome particular Perſon, whoſe Dictates and Perſwaſions he moſt of all affected to follow. Every one almoſt locking up the Gates of Heaven with the Key of his own private Opinion, and excluding all them that cannot compromiſe with his Judgment and Perſwaſion. And thus they build up again that Partition-Wall between *Jew* and *Gentile*, which, at the Death of Chriſt was rent aſunder, to intimate to us,

That

That in the Chriſtian Religion (as the Apoſtle ſhows, *Col.* 3. 11.) there ſhould be *neither* Greek *nor* Jew, *Circumciſion nor Uncircumciſion*, Barbarian, Scythian, *Bond nor Free*; *but Chriſt ſhould be all and in all.* That is, there ſhould be no more diſtinction of Parties, but all ſhould be of the ſame Mind, profeſſing the ſame Chriſtian Faith, and owning the ſame common Saviour, and ſhould be ſo united and incorporated together, as to become as it were one Myſtical Chriſt.

Religion lies not in the Brain, neither is it this or that Opinion that will bring a Man to the Haven of his deſired Happineſs, without the conſtant Practice of all Chriſtian Vertues, and the indiſpenſible Duties of the Goſpel of Chriſt. Great Knowledge, without the inward Life and Power of Religion, is but like the fruitleſs

Fig.

Fig-Tree, that ſent forth nothing but broad Leaves, and renders a Man ſo much the more miſerable, by how much the more *he knew his Maſters Will and did it not.* Happy were it for the World, if every Mans Knowledge would bloſſom into Practice, and bring forth Fruits anſwerable to that Holy and Pure Religion he lives under. There is no knowledge in Chriſtianity that will do a Man any good unleſs it be in order to Practice; and he only is truly Wiſe who makes this uſe of his Knowledge, that he may become the better Chriſtian. *Though I ſpeak with the Tongue of Men and Angels, and have not Charity* (ſays St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. 13. 1.) *I am become but as ſounding Braſs or a tinkling Cymbal.* And if a Man had all the Wiſdom of the World epitomiz'd and contain'd within his own Breaſt, yet if he made uſe of this

this for Oſtentation, or to gain a Party, and not for the purifying his Heart, and enlarging the Kingdom of GOD in his Soul, his Religion would be but an empty noiſe, and he would find this building which he has raiſed upon the Sands too weak to hold out againſt the Storms of Troubles and Afflictions. *The Wiſdom which is from above* (as St. *James* informs us, *Chap.* 3. 17.) *is firſt Pure, then Peaceable, gentle and eaſie to be Intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without Partiality and without Hypocriſie.* And again, *Chap.* 1. 27. *Pure Religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to viſit the Fatherleſs and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep himſelf unſpotted from the World.* Now, when Men ſhall neglect theſe plain and indiſpenſible Duties of Chriſtianity, and take up with ſome ſelf-choſen Opinions, that

that contribute nothing to the true honouring of God, or the edifying of our Fellow Christians, it is no wonder that Religion does not gain ground and thrive in the World.

2. Another Reason why Religion prevails so little upon Mens Hearts is, because they live too much upon Sence. We are more affected with the present Objects of our Senses, than with the things that are invisible, and at a distance from us, and are only Objects of our Faith. Whereas Christianity, when firmly seated in us, and the Power of it displayed upon our Souls, would teach us to *Walk by Faith, and not by Sight*, 2 *Cor.* 5. 7. And accordingly, if we did make the infinite Rewards of Immortality but present to our Minds, and did as firmly believe them, as we do what we see, and hear, and handle,

handle, it is impoſſible but that we ſhould be equally affected with them, and they would have as ſtrong a Faith upon us. The ſure Promiſe of Immortal Glory would as ſtrongly move and put us upon Action, as any worldly and ſenſible Good, if the Belief were equal. And if we acted agreeably to the Conſtitution of our own Natures, the Reaſons and Arguments ſuggeſted to us by our Rational Faculties, ought as forcibly and powerfully to perſwade us as thoſe which are urged upon us by our Senſes. But while we ſpeak doubtfully, and believe waveringly and uncertainly, the Felicities and Joys of the other World, make little or no Impreſſion upon us. And this doubtleſs is one great Reaſon that Religion has ſo little effect upon our Minds. Suppoſe we ſaw our Lord and Saviour coming in the Clouds,

Clouds, attended with Thouſands of mighty Angels to judge the World, which, with the Glory and Brightneſs of their Heavenly Bodies, ſhould cauſe a Light, ſurpaſſing that of the Sun; How ſtrangely would ſuch a ſight as this affect us! Surely, it is nothing but our Earthlineſs, and the dwelling of our Minds ſo much upon Senſe that we are ſo little affected with the thoughts of it now; ſince that which will certainly come to paſs, ought to be looked upon as juſt now preſent.

3. Laſtly, to the foregoing Particulars we may add, as one no mean Cauſe why the Goſpel prevails ſo little upon Men, *viz.* the want of that which the Apoſtle St. *Jude* ſpeaks of, *ver.* 20. *The building up one another in our moſt Holy Faith.* As GOD renews and regenerates our Natures by his Holy

Holy Spirit, ſo it is the Duty of all Chriſtians to be workers together with him, and to edifie and ſtrengthen one another, and help to carry on to perfection that work which GOD has begun in their Souls. In *Rom.* 15. 2, 3. the Apoſtle charges this Duty upon every Chriſtian, *Let every one of you pleaſe his Neighbour for his good to Edification, i. e.* Let every Man ſubject his own ends and deſires to the ſpiritual Good of other Men, *viz.* to the confirming and building them up in the Chriſtian Faith. And to bind this Exhortation yet faſter upon the Conſciences of Men, the Apoſtle makes uſe of the Example of Chriſt, in the next words, *For even Chriſt pleaſed not himſelf, i. e.* Chriſt had no reſpects for himſelf, no ends of his own to conſult, but as if he had wholly forgotten himſelf, he

devoted himſelf perfectly to the promoting of his Father's Glory. The whole number of Chriſtians that believe in Jeſus are one Body: Now as the Members of the Body have the ſame care one of another, ſo ought every Man to be very tender of the Good of his Fellow-Chriſtian. If a Man be a true and unfeigned Chriſtian, he will not walk ſolitary and alone in his way to Heaven, but will ſtrive to draw as many to accompany him as he can, in ſo pleaſant and gainful a Journey. He will always be inſtructing thoſe that are ignorant, comforting the weak-hearted, and ſtrengthning thoſe that are wavering and unſettled. And where theſe things are wanting, and every one lives as a Stranger to another, it cannot be expected that the Goſpel ſhould draw off Men from Sin ſo ſucceſsfully, and with

ſo

ſo much Triumph, as it would if Men would lay aſide their little Self-ends, and be of more univerſal and publick Spirits, and employ their Wit and Diligence in doing good to one another.

The ſumm and concluſion of the whole matter is this: Since Chriſtian Religion was intended not merely for Wiſe-Men, and ſuch as were of great Reach and Underſtanding, but for the pooreſt and weakeſt Perſon, it is in all things neceſſary to Salvation made plain and eaſie. And that GOD might gratifie our innocent ſearch after Knowledge, he has hid many precious Treaſures of Wiſdom in the Scriptures, as a Reward of our Piety and Diligence. And therefore, where any thing is delivered ſo obſcurely, that with our beſt diligence we cannot attain to the true ſence and meaning of it, it is

a ſure ſign that whatever ſence GOD intended, yet he did not make that abſolutely neceſſary to the Salvation of all Men. For if he had, he would have laid it down in plain, and not in intricate and ambiguous Terms. In the mean time, we muſt all conſider that it is our Duty to pray unto GOD (as the Apoſtle St. *Paul* for his Diſciples the *Coloſſians*, *Chap.* 1.9,10.) and *to deſire that we may be filled with the knowledge of his Will in all Wiſdom and ſpiritual Underſtanding; That we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good Work, and increaſing in the knowledge of God.* And let us remember that as GOD has diſtributed the meaſures of his Gifts and Graces to every one, accordingly ſhall their account be at the laſt day. He that cannot read the Bible, and has fewer opportunities

tunities of knowledge, his account ſhall not be ſo great as his that can Read, and has leiſure and time to inform himſelf. And he that has skill and knowledge to underſtand the Scriptures, ſhall yet be more ſeverely treated, if he do not make uſe of this, both for his own and his Neighbour's Good.

A DEFENCE OF *Revealed Religion.*

SERMON V.

ROM. I. 16.

For I am not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt ——

HAving diſpatched the three firſt Cauſes of Shame, we come now to remove and take away the fourth and laſt, and to ſhew the great *Uſefulneſs* of Chriſtian Religion to the World. The uſefulneſs therefore of any thing conſiſts in the ſerviceableneſs

of it for that end to which it was designed. Now this very Apostle assures us, 1 *Tim.* 4. 8. that *Godliness is profitable to all things, having the Promise of the Life that now is, and that which is to come*; that is to say, Christianity is serviceable, useful, and conducing to promote the Happiness of Mankind, both in respect of this present Life, and that which is to come. First then, we shall consider the Usefulness of Christ's Religion, in order to the Felicity of the next World, and shew how excellently well suited it is to the attaining of that. Which the Apostle seems to intimate in the Words of the Text, when he calls it the *Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believes*. Had Christian Religion designed the instructing of Men in the knowledge of Nature, giving them a true System of the Heavens, and declaring

the Natures and Properties of all Things in this our Earthly Globe; it would indeed have filled the Mind of Man with abundance of Pleaſure and Delight, but had mightily fallen ſhort of that univerſal Uſefulneſs that now it hath.

The great End therefore which God intended by the Goſpel, was the Advancement of true Godlineſs, the pulling down and deſtroying the Kingdom of Sin and Satan, and the erecting and ſetting up the Kingdom of Light and Grace in the Hearts and Minds of Men. And that this was the purpoſe of God cannot be unknown to any who conſiders the great Excellency and Perfection of the Commands of Chriſtianity, and what a high meaſure of Purity and Sanctity they aim at; namely, the entire Purification of the Soul from all manner of Terreſtrial

De-

Defilements and Pollutions, and the raiſing up in it a Divine and Heavenly Nature, which being that State wherein we were at firſt created, and into which we are recovered by the gentle Influences and Illapſes of the Divine Spirit upon us, there is begotten in our Souls a daily Tendency upwards, and a reſtleſs endeavour to free themſelves from that Preternatural Load that hangs about them, and this effort of theirs receiving freſh Strength and Supplies from above, never ceaſes till it have wrought them to ſuch a high Pitch as through the Benignity and Power of him who is *the beginning of the Creation of God*, they may be tranſlated into the Peaceful Manſions of everlaſting Glory.

We ſhall conſider then the exquiſite ſuitableneſs and ſerviceableneſs of the Goſpel, for the extirpation

pation of all Sin and Vice, and putting Men in poſſeſſion of a Holy and Divine Nature, which ſurely is the moſt advantageous Happineſs the Soul of Man is capable of. And if Religion be furniſhed with ſuch Powers and Aſſiſtances as will, againſt all Oppoſition whatever, attain this great End, then its uſefulneſs to the World will be evidently diſcovered, and no Man will have any reaſon to be aſhamed of it.

Now, that this End may be attained,

1. God is pleaſed to promiſe us the Aſſiſtance of his holy and bleſſed Spirit. For we being ſo ſunk into this Earthly State, that we are wholly carried away with its Affections and Luſts, could never by our own ſingle effort and ſolitary endeavours bring our ſelves back to the Participation of that

that Holy and Divine Life we fell from. Therefore God, out of his infinite Love and Compaſſion, and upon the Interceſſion of our Lord and Saviour, has vouchſafed us the aid of his bleſſed Spirit, to regenerate our Natures, and to form in us ſuch a ſtrong and active Principle of Holineſs as ſhould ſteadily carry our Wills to a perfect compliance and obedience to his Holy Will. That we ſhould not ſhelter our ſelves in a formal outſide Sanctity, but attain to that New-birth, wherein all the Power of Sin is perfectly vanquiſhed and ſubdued; and no Life ſtiring but that which flows from and partakes of God's Spirit. And we having ſuch a Potent Aſſiſtance, it muſt needs enliven and encourage us to put forth all our Strength in mortifying our Sins and Corruptions; being aſſured

that

that through the mighty energy of this Divine Spirit, we ſhall become Victorious over all our Enemies. And that though we have old Rebellious Giants within us, powerful Luſts like the Sons of *Anak*, yet this Almighty Spirit (if we be not treacherous and falſe to his Inſpirations) is able, and certainly will bring us into the promiſed Land. And that we have no greater ſucceſs in the Mortification of our Sins proceeds not from the want of the ſupply of God's Spirit, but from our own Careleſneſs and Falſeneſs. When he calls to us to awake and ariſe from the Dead, from that dull and ſtupid condition we lie in under our Sins, we reſiſt his Influence, and ſhut our Eyes againſt that Light that ſhines in upon us, and fall again to our old ſlumbering and drowzineſs.

But

But if we would collect the Powers and Faculties of our Souls together, and go againſt our ſtrongeſt Vices and our habitual and cuſtomary Sins with hearty and ſincere Reſolutions of deſtroying them, this Spirit would never be wanting to us, but we ſhould find wonders wrought in our own Souls. We ſhould find the dry and parched Soil, that barren Wilderneſs wherein no Plant of ſincere Piety and Righteouſneſs has of a long time proſpered, to become a Plantation of GOD, and filled with all Divine Graces and Vertues. For certainly GOD has not afforded us this Help to gratifie our Idleneſs or Vanity, but to actuate our Diligence, and to enliven our faint and drooping Spirits. That we may not conceit our ſelves to be under an invincible Infirmity and Imbecility

and

and that we ſhall never be able to free our ſelves from the Tyranny of the Body of Sin, but to go on with Courage, and reſt aſſured, that *when the Enemy comes in like a Flood, the Spirit of the Lord ſhall lift up a Standard againſt him.*

This muſt of neceſſity bring a wonderful comfort to a Man under his ſtrongeſt Temptations, and in his ſoreſt Conflicts with Sin and Vice to be aſſured not only that he ſhall not be left alone and forſaken, but that this eternal Spirit ſhall co-operate with him, and ſtrengthen and perfect him in the inner Man, till he have brought him unto Glory. And becauſe the Promiſe of the Holy Spirit is one of the great Props and Encouragements of a Chriſtian Travelling through the Wilderneſs of this World, therefore it is, in plain Words, and without a Parable, de-

declared by our bleſſed Saviour, *John* 14.15,16,17. *If ye love me, keep my Commandments; And I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: Even the Spirit of Truth, whom the World cannot receive, becauſe it ſeeth him not, neither knows him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and ſhall be in you.*

2. A ſecond powerful Motive for the begetting a Divine Life and Nature in Men (which is the ultimate end of Chriſtian Religion) is the conſideration of the ſtupendious love of GOD in ſending Jeſus Chriſt for the Redemption of the World. This our Lord himſelf ſignified to us, *John* 3. 16. *So God loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.* GOD is a Being of infinite Love and Goodneſs,

neſs, that as he made all things to be happy according to their ſeveral Natures, ſo his compaſſionate Eyes could not behold them for ever loſt and involved in an inextricable Ruine (though through their own Fault) and not provide them ſome means of recovery. The Pſalmiſt ſays, (*Pſal.* 145. 9.) *that the tender Mercies of God are over all his Works*: And if Compaſſion and Mercy be eſſential Attributes of GOD (as doubtleſs they are) then there is a mighty ſuitableneſs and agreeableneſs between a poor and undone Creature and Pity and Compaſſion. Whereby we are aſſured that it is alone the infinite Love, Mercy, and Compaſſion of GOD that moved him to reſcue the World from periſhing for ever. And that this might more deeply affect our Hearts, and more powerfully draw us off from our Sins,

his All-comprehenſive Wiſdom ſo contrived it, that his only begotten Son ſhould take our Nature upon him, and be the Saviour and Redeemer of all his loſt Brethren. What a ſtrong Argument now is this to reclaim the moſt ſtubborn Offender? Had we but common Gratitude it would certainly move us to make our returns of Love and Affection in ſome degree anſwerable to ſo infinite a Kindneſs. And when we ſhall conſider further that all this Proviſion was only upon our Account, and that GOD was not in the leaſt bettered or made more happy by our Salvation; this will turn it into Admiration, that GOD ſhould take ſuch pains, and compaſs ſuch ſtrange Deſigns, and all for his Enemies that wilfully departed and revolted from him.

3. There

3. There is another cogent Argument to promote the grand deſign of the Goſpel, and that is a ſerious Meditation upon the Crucifixion and Death of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. It is a wonderful Privilege granted to Men that they ſhould be received into favour after their heinous Rebellion againſt God. But when we conſider that this Privilege was not bought or procured for them by ſuch mean and contemptible things as Silver and Gold (for which yet we know that things of greateſt Worth, pertaining to this Life may be had) but by the *precious Blood of Jeſus Chriſt, that immaculate Lamb*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 *Pet.* 1. 18, 19. this makes it ſtill more wonderful. For the greatneſs of the Price by which any Privilege or Liberty is purchaſed for any Man, 'tis a higher engage-

ment upon him to improve this Benefit to the utmoſt, as well for his behoof who has made the Purchaſe for him, as for his own. And what Treaſure is there in Heaven and Earth more valuable than the precious Blood of the Son of GOD? And yet he willingly offered this for the World, that he might diſengage Men from their Sins, and perſwade them to follow Holineſs, which ſhould be for their eternal Benefit and Advantage. To illuſtrate this by a familiar Similitude, ſuppoſe ſome dear Friend ſhould part with his Life to redeem another from ſome certain danger which otherwiſe would ruine him, and ſhould only Condition with him to perform ſome eaſie Commands, which yet ſhould tend to his unſpeakable Good and Advantage: Could ſuch a Man ſlight ſo great a Love, or ever think himſelf

ſelf too punctual in obſerving thoſe light Injunctions which his dying Friend had laid upon him? Surely, if it were but for his own Gain and Profit he would never diſregard them. The caſe is the ſame with us; Jeſus Chriſt, who took our Fleſh and Blood upon him, parted with his own Life to Redeem us from an inevitable Danger which would have undone us for ever: And in recompence of this great Love, he deſires us only to make our ſelves Happy by taking upon us his eaſie Yoke and light Burthen: And can we be ſo ungrateful as to ſlight him for it, and forget his Commands? What Bands or Cords can tye Souls nearer together than that Love which is ſtronger than Death? Or what Words make deeper Impreſſions upon the Hearts of Men than thoſe that are ſpoken by their dying

Friends? It is not poſſible for the Heart of Man to conceive a more effectual way to expell Sin and Wickedneſs, and more conducing to the furthering of Goodneſs and Holineſs than the conſideration of the Death of Chriſt.

For that the Son of GOD who had no Sins of his own to ſatisfie for, ſhould deſcend from Heaven and ſubmit himſelf to the Weakneſs, Frailty, and Drudgery of our Mortal State, and endure ſuch deep Agonies of Spirit as forced him to ſweat drops of Blood, and after ſuffer an inglorious and painful Death upon the Croſs, and this merely upon our Account, and out of a mighty ſenſe of Compaſſion for our Miſery, is ſo aſtoniſhing a Love as muſt needs thaw our icy Hearts, and diſſolve them into Tears, and a ready Conformity to his Will. How can any Man go

on

on and continue in Sin, when he conſiders that his Saviour came for this only end into the World, that he might deſtroy the Works of Sin and Satan, and preſent all Men a glorious Church to GOD, without Spot or Wrinkle!

Whatever Sin therefore it be that aſſaults thy Soul, preſent unto it thy dying Saviour, who, with his out-ſtretched Arms on the Croſs, ſues for admittance into thy ſtrongeſt Affections. Art thou inſnared with Pride? How canſt thou look upon thy ſelf without watry Eyes, when thou beholdeſt the Son of GOD born a helpleſs Infant of a poor Virgin, ſubject to all the Hardſhips and ſinleſs Infirmities of our Nature, and at laſt breathing out his innocent Soul on the Croſs for his bitter Enemies? Art thou Covetous and too deſirous of worldly Enjoyments? then re-

member *Judas*, and conſider what a heinous and bloody Act his Covetouſneſs betrayed him to, even the delivering up his harmleſs Lord and Maſter to the malicious and implacable *Jews*. And whoever ſets his Heart upon the World, he does with *Judas* ſell his Saviour. Thus you may ſee of what great uſefulneſs this one Conſideration of the Death of Chriſt is, to the Mortification of all our Sins. And this the Goſpel every where holds forth to the ſame purpoſe, that we ſhould expreſs his Death on the Croſs in our Souls, by our dying unto Sin, and Crucifying all our corrupt Luſts and Affections.

4. Another powerful means by which Men are drawn off from their Sins, and engaged in Holineſs, is the Example of our Holy Lord and Maſter. Whoſe Life and Actions were therefore carefully written

written by his Diſciples, that Men might learn of him and follow his Steps. And that we may more clearly diſcover wherein we are to imitate and follow the example of our Lord and Saviour, we muſt diſtinguiſh between thoſe Actions which our Lord did as a publick Perſon, inveſted with Authority from Heaven; As likewiſe thoſe Actions of his which he did to confirm his Miſſion; we muſt diſtinguiſh theſe (I ſay) from thoſe wherein he is ſet as an Example for us to imitate.

1. Therefore we are not called to imitate Chriſt in thoſe Actions which he performed as a publick Perſon. For there were many things which he did that related wholly to his Office, as he was the Meſſiah, the great Repreſentative of Mankind, who took upon him and came down from Heaven to re-

reconcile the World to God. Thus he gave new Laws of Life to Men, and forgave Sins by his own Power and Authority, and laid down his Life as a publick Victim and Sacrifice for the World. To these we may add his Fasting forty Days and forty Nights; His leading a single Life, and refusing all Earthly Honour and Dignity. And hitherto likewise we may referr that Action of Zeal wherewith our Lord was possessed for the Honour of God, and in behalf of the despised Gentiles against a corrupt Generation, who only pretended, but had really nothing of true Zeal, or the Honour of God in them; when (as St. *Matthew* relates it, *Chap.* 21. 12.) *He went into the Temple of God, and cast out all them that Sold and Bought in the Temple, and overthrew the Tables of the Money-Changers, and the Seats of them that sold Doves.*

2. Nor

2. Nor are we called to follow and imitate Chriſt in thoſe Actions which he did to teſtifie the Truth of his Miſſion, that he came from God, and acted by his ſole Authority. Such were all his miraculous Works; His giving Sight to the Blind, Speech to the Dumb, and hearing to the Deaf. His commanding the Winds and Waves of the Sea, which inſtantly obeyed him. His multiplying Bread, according to his own Pleaſure, ſo that a few Loaves ſhould be ſufficient to ſatisfie ſome Thouſands of Eaters. His curing all bodily Diſeaſes and Diſtempers, and ſhewing his Power over Evil Spirits, which, upon his ſole Command and Word, were forced to leave thoſe Bodies they had vexed and tormented. But above all, his raiſing the Dead to Life, ſhewing that he had a Power not only here, but in the Regions of ſeparate Souls likewiſe. Now

Now in neither of these are we called to imitate our Lord and Saviour. But though we are not enjoyned to follow him in these, yet are they not therefore thrown away or recorded to no purpose. We may make a good use of every one of these Actions of our Saviour, though we lie under no necessity to imitate him in them; nay, it were a presumption in us so to do.

When we read that he fasted Forty days, we may learn that the further we withdraw our Minds from bodily Lusts and Affections, we are in a greater Forwardness and better Disposition to converse with God. When we hear that our Saviour Christ stedfastly declined all Earthly Dignities and Honours: It shews us what a light esteem God puts upon these things in comparison of the participation of his Nature in true Goodness and

Righ-

Righteouſneſs. And ſo of all our Lord's Miraculous Actions, which were as ſo many Credentials and Seals from Heaven, that atteſted and verified his Commiſſion and the Authority by which he acted. There is ſomething ſtill that we may draw for our encouragement and ſupport in that holy and unblameable Life, which he came to propagate in the World.

When we find him by a Miracle redreſſing the Infirmities of Mankind, and eaſing them of their Sorrows, by curing their bodily Diſtempers; Does not this teach us to be of a Compaſſionate Temper to ſympathize with others in their Miſeries, and, as far as we are able, to lend our aſſiſting hand to free them from them: When we behold our Lord caſting out Devils, does it not aſſure us that he has Power over the dark Kingdom? and

and that if we will ſubmit to his Gracious Laws, he will at laſt *bruiſe Satan under our Feet?* When we ſee him by his Commanding and All-powerful Word, raiſing the Dead, it cannot but beget in us a ſtrong Faith and Truſt in him, that though we die, and our places know us no more, yet his Power, *which is able to ſubdue all things unto it ſelf*, can and will recover us again to Life, and at laſt *ſwallow up Death in Victory.* Thus it is plain, that though we are not called to imitate our Saviour in thoſe Actions wherein he ſtood as a Publick Perſon, nor in thoſe which he performed, chiefly to ſhow that he came from GOD; yet there is a great and a good uſe to be made of every one of them recorded in the Goſpel.

But that which more nearly concerns us is, that there are certain Things wherein the Example of Chriſt

Chriſt is propoſed as a fair Copy for our Imitation, and to which we ought to conform our ſelves. And theſe are all thoſe things wherein he came to exhibit to Mankind a moſt perfect and compleat draught of a Divine Life and Nature, and which it is the Deſign of GOD in the Goſpel to make us Partakers of. As namely, a firm and unſhaken Faith in the Goodneſs and Power of GOD, that he is both able and willing to reduce and bring us back to himſelf, and that nothing ſhall fail of all the Good that he hath promiſed. Moreover, we are enjoyned to follow our bleſſed Redeemer in the Purity and Sanctity of his Life, by keeping our ſelves unſpotted from the World and the Fleſh. And then that we imitate him in his wonderful and exemplary Humility, who being, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks,

ſpeaks, *Phil.* 2. 6, 7. ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, cloathed with Celeſtial Light and Glory, and poſſeſſed of all the Happineſs of thoſe Immortal Regions, yet emptied himſelf *and took upon him* μορφὴν δούλου *the form of a Servant*, or ὁμοίωμα and σχῆμα ἀνθρώπου *the likeneſs and faſhion of Man*; that is, he came into theſe Earthly Regions, took upon him a Humane Body, and was made a Man who is really δοῦλος φθορᾶς a Servant of Corruption in this Terreſtrial State. And laſtly, We are to follow the Example of our Lord and Saviour in an univerſal and un-ſelf-intereſſed Love, who was not contented to be happy alone, but died to recover the reſt of his ſtrayed Brethren. Here is the fair Image and Reſemblance of that Divine Life our Lord Jeſus came to propagate upon Earth, and to which we ought all to be conformed according to that ex-

excellent Pattern that he has laid before us.

5. To the intent that the things which pertain to Life and Godlineſs may be vigorouſly purſued, and all Sin and Vice diſcountenanced and baniſhed, the great and laſt Day of Judgment is made known to us. When the fixt and determinate Time is come wherein GOD thinks fit to put an end to the Generations of Men, and all ſorts of Animals by the Conflagration of this Terreſtrial Globe, then ſhall Jeſus Chriſt viſibly deſcend from Heaven with the ſound of a Trumpet, and the voice of an Arch-angel accompanied with innumerable Bands and Squadrons of the Heavenly Militia, and every individual Perſon that has lived in the World ſince *Adam* to that very time, ſhall viſibly appear before him. And as the

Angels reſcued Lot from that particular Burning of *Sodom*, and the reſt of the Cities of the Plain, ſo theſe officious Spirits ſhall be imployed by their great Prince and Head, Chriſt Jeſus, *to gather his Elect*
Mat. 24. 31 *from the four Winds, from one end of Heaven to the other*, and ſave them from this univerſal Burning that ſhall at once ſeize upon this lower World. For then, by the mighty Power and Word of him that created all things, the ſubterraneous Treaſures of Fire ſhall be opened, which meeting with thoſe fierce and penetrating Fires wherewith the whole Vault of Heaven is enflam'd, with their joint and united force will melt and diſſolve all Terreſtrial Mixtures and Combinations, and compleat that Sulphureous Lake and external Hell which was of old prepared for the Devil and his Angels. By all which

which we ſee the mighty efficacy of the Goſpel, and what powerful means it is furniſhed withal to reclaim Men from their Sins, and fit them for an eternal Happineſs in another World.

A DEFENCE OF *Revealed Religion.*

SERMON VI.

ROM. I. 16.

For I am not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt ——

THE uſefulneſs and ſerviceableneſs of the Chriſtian Doctrine for the promoting the Immortal Happineſs of Men having been fully ſhown in the preceeding Diſcourſe, and likewiſe the ſuitableneſs, ſtrength and efficacy of the Argu-

ments contained in it to that end and Purpoſe, we ſhall now, as a Concluſion of all, ſhow, that Chriſtianity is highly conducing to the happineſs of Mankind, in reference to this Life, and that there cannot be a better way for any Perſon to live happily in this World, than by a due and ſincere Obſervation of the Laws and Commands of Chriſt Jeſus.

And that this may appear eaſie and natural, we need but take an Inventory of all thoſe good things that this our Earthly State is capable of, and we ſhall find that the due obſervance of Chriſt's Commands is the moſt proper means both for their Acquiſition and Continuance.

The Bleſſings then of this Life, are ſuch as either relate to the publick, or ſuch as concern every particular Man's Perſon: The publick Bleſſings are,

1. *Peace.*

1. *Peace.* Let us ſee now how excellently well Religion provides for this; Our bleſſed Saviour, the Prince of Peace, came to unite and cement all Chriſtians into one Body, to heal the Diſtempers of Mankind, and to make all the jarring Principles of the World chime together. And if Men were conformed to his Example, and put in practice his Commands, there would be no occaſion of Diſturbances, no Animoſities or Contentions, but an univerſal Calm would overſpread the Earth, and this World would ſhine out into a perfect Heaven. *From whence come Wars and Fightings among you?* ſays the Apoſtle, *James* 4. 1. From whence is it all the Troubles and Confuſions of the World flow? *Come they not of your Luſts that War in your Members?* And *Solomon* aſſures us, *Prov.* 13. 10. that it is

only by Pride Contention comes. Here is the ſource of all the Miſeries that Mankind now groans under. For when Mens Luſts and Paſſions become exorbitant, they raiſe unequal and convulſive Motions in the Body Politick, as the undue Fermentation of the Humours in the natural Body often produces dangerous effects. It is Mens unbridled Appetites (which Religion came to correct) that makes them murmur and repine againſt the preſent Settlement of the Nation, though the greateſt Bleſſings that we can hope for here, both for our ſelves and our Poſterity are the moſt likely to be derived from hence.

Theſe unruly and fretting Paſſions of Pride, Envy and Malice are the Cauſes that diſturb Mens own Quiet, and that of the Society wherein they live, and makes them like thoſe Diſconſolate Spirits we read

read of in the Goſpel, continually wandring up and down *ſeeking reſt but finding none.* But if they would ſtrive to ſuppreſs the Boilings and irregular Fermentations of their Spirits, and endeavour to turn them into Calmneſs and Meekneſs; if they would give that Honour and Deference to their preſent Governors that Chriſt's Law Commands; and bear a hearty Love and Benignity to all their Fellow Creatures, it is impoſſible but that a laſting Peace and Concord ſhould enſue upon ſuch fit and duly qualified Preparations. They would then ſee that our preſent eſtabliſhment, which Divine Providence hath ſo miraculouſly brought about, is not only for our own, but the univerſal Good and Happineſs of all *Europe.*

2. Another Publick Bleſſing is Plenty; which cannot be more deſirable

ſirable, than it is aſcertain'd and ſecur'd by the Laws of Chriſtianity. For what can more contribute to a general Plenty, than that every Man be induſtrious in his proper Calling? The Chriſtian Doctrine enjoyns Diligence, which, like a provident Governeſs, ſollicites and excites the torpid and languiſhing Members of our Earthly Frame, to a careful diſcharge of the ſeveral Offices of Humane Life.

Religion is a thing that retrenches the unruly Appetites of Men, and cuts off thoſe ſuperfluous Expences which Luxury and Debauchery make them obnoxious to. And this it does by teaching Temperance and Frugality, and by ſhewing Men a nobler and more profitable way of converting their Abundance by Charity to the Neceſſitous and Indigent, which is indeed a true imitation of that divine

divine and overflowing Goodneſs which the whole Creation, in their ſeveral Meaſures and Capacities, taſtes of.

3. A third Publick Bleſſing is, Safety and Security from *Danger*. Which Religion hath ſo far an influence upon, that it tells us, it is only the true fear of GOD *that can make us dwell in ſafety*; And, *That no Evil ſhall happen to the Juſt, but the Wicked ſhall be filled with Miſchief*. Again, *Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation, but Sin is the Reproach of any People*. When Men once become Treacherous to their GOD, they ſeldom prove true to his Vicegerent here below. And if they had walked up ſincerely to the Preſcriptions of Chriſtianity, the Fears of a Foreign Invaſion had been needleſs. It is want of Religion that makes Men betray their Native Country, correſpond with its

Pſal. 4. 8. Prov. 12. 21.

Prov. 14. 34.

its Enemies, and puts them upon ſuch courſes as the braver and more generous Heathens looked upon as Wretched and Ignoble. For ſurely thoſe Perſons who can let themſelves looſe to unhinge an eſtabliſhed Government, to weaken and undermine a Prince, who, upon juſter Accounts, Merits to be called *Deliciæ humani generis*, than that Noble *Roman* Emperor; whatever pretences they may make to Chriſtianity, will find it the hardeſt thing in the World to prove they have any Religion at all.

Where a People are truly Religious, ſubmiſſive to their lawful Governours and Charitably affected towards one another, there the inviſible Miniſters of GOD's Providence are engaged in their Protection and Defence; and thoſe Chariots and Horſes of Fire are as ready now to preſerve true Goodneſs,

neſs, as heretofore to ſecure the Prophet *Eliſha* from the Attempts of the *Syrian* Army. 'Tis only when a Nation grows deplorably Wicked, that their Guardian Providence is withdrawn, and thoſe kind and officious Spirits, ſay, as of old of *Babylon*, *Forſake her and let us go.*

By this it appears that Religion and Vertue are abundantly ſerviceable for the obtaining Publick and General Bleſſings: Now, for thoſe that relate to every particular Man's Perſon, they are either the Bleſſings of the Soul or Body, or of both. Thoſe of the Soul are,

1. Joy and Contentment of Mind; when the Soul enjoys it ſelf in a perpetual Calm, and is not ruffled and diſcompoſed with boiſterous Paſſions. I do not mean that our Paſſions ſhould be eradicated by a Stoical Apathy, for that

that were to deprive the Soul of the choiceſt Furniture which God and Nature has bountifully conferred upon it, and to turn Men into ſome other Species of Being than what they are; Deſire being the Feet and Wings of the Mind in its vigorous contention after Vertue, and Hope and Gladneſs the Arms that embrace ſo great a Good: But that when the Affections are kept within their due Bounds and Limits, and all ſubjected to the *Imperium* and Command of the firſt mover, *Divine Love*, the Soul ſuſtains and keeps it ſelf ſo firm and compacted by that inward Power and Strength, that the moſt violent Storm of external Accidents cannot ſhake or diſſettle that Satisfaction and Contentment it reaps from the exerciſe of Vertue.

And

And indeed this is ſuch an ineſtimable and ſolid Treaſure, as is juſtly to be preferred before the choiceſt Gratifications of the bodily Life. All worldly Joy is flaſhy and dilute, and carries with it much of an Earthly Compoſition; But that ſatisfaction of Mind that ariſes from a ſence of well-doing, is ſubſtantial and immoveable, and can neither be deſtroyed by Time, nor damp'd and choak'd by the moſt Calamitous Circumſtances of Humane Life. Who are there in the World that live ſo pleaſantly and contentedly, as they that are truly Religious? Whoſe Minds are free from all diſtruſtful Fears and Jealouſies, believing themſelves ſecure under the Royal Mantle of Heavens Care and Providence, and who can look back upon their paſt Lives without any ſenſe of Terror and Guilt. So that

that if our Hearts and Conſciences condemn us not for Sin and Vice, they will ſet us above all thoſe anxious Fears and Sollicitude that render a Man's Life uncomfortable.

On the other ſide it is certain, that every Vice fatally draws after it a Chain of Miſery and Affliction, and he that makes a Trade of Sin cannot but look upon himſelf as a Perſon always obliged to Puniſhment. And this creates a perpetual diſtruſt and miſgiving of Mind, affording him nothing to ſupport his Patience under here, nor any hope of bettering his Condition hereafter. But beſides theſe diſquieting Fears and Terrors, the conſtant Attendants of Vice, which produce reſtleſs Days, and ſleepleſs and uneaſie Nights; thoſe Evil and wicked Affections to which Men in this Life are enſlaved, have a very Evil Influence upon their Souls in the

the other World. For whatever it be that the Mind of Man purſues as its ultimate Good and Felicity, thoſe Paſſionate Deſires and Emigrations of Spirit after it, follow him even into the next Life. The Covetous Perſon who ſpins out his Life in a golden Thread, hath his Appetite and Hunger keenly edg'd in the next World, after the Idol which he ador'd in this. And the Laſcivious Man burns with thoſe Flames his Debauched Soul had kindled here below. And becauſe the future State denies the acting of thoſe Vices in ſuch Circumſtances as here upon Earth, it rends the perplexed Mind with a perpetual Thirſt after that which ſhe can never enjoy. So little hope is there of ſolid Contentment and Satisfaction in any thing but ſincere Vertue.

2. Communion with God is another Bleſſing of the Soul. But this is ſo peculiar to Vertue and Religion, that a wicked Man, while he continues ſo, can never have the leaſt taſte or vital reliſh of it. There is a kind of natural ſympathy and harmony running through the World, whereby things of a like nature incline to and are attractive of one another. Now, where there is no agreeableneſs or ſuitableneſs of Nature, there can be no firm Union or Society. And it is as impoſſible for a Vitious Man to have any Communion with God, as it is for the Elements to change their Natures, or Darkneſs and Light to combine, and lovingly ſhake hands together. And whatever our Modern Spiritualiſts and Enthuſiaſts may talk of their being Godded with God, and Chriſtned with Chriſt (to whom

whom it may juſtly be replied in the words of *Plotinus* long ago to the *Gnoſticks*, that ἀνεν ἀρετῆς θεὸς ὄνομα μόνον without Vertue and real Goodneſs, GOD is but a Name, an empty and dry ſound) yet certainly there is a very intimate Communion between GOD and the Soul of every Good Man, when the Soul converſes with him, ἐν ἡσύχῳ ἐπαφῇ, *by a quiet and ſecret feeling of the Vertue, Sweetneſs, and Power of his Goodneſs*, as the forenamed Philoſopher expreſſes it. And deſcribing further this tactual Conjunction of the Soul with GOD, he ſaith, That GOD and the Soul doth, as it were, κέντρον κέντρῳ συνάψαι *join Centres*, and Centres do wholly ſwallow up one another, ſo that this Philoſopher ſeems to aim at an Union even more than touch. But whatever Idea theſe high and raiſed Expreſſions may imprint

upon our Minds, yet doubtleſs their full ſence is comprehended in that of St. *John*, 1 *Ep.* 4. 16. *God is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him, i. e.* there is an intimate Communication between God and he, that is throughly Baptiz'd into the Spirit of Divine Love, and God imparts himſelf to ſuch an one in this Life, ſo far as he is capable of receiving the Communications of his infinite Fulneſs. Which is the higheſt Privilege of Created Nature.

3. A good uſe of our Faculties, as the Underſtanding, Memory and Will. When the Underſtanding is pure and clear, and capable of Differencing and Diſcerning the beſt Things, and the Will obedient to that Light preſented to it, and the Memory like a Faithful Steward, Treaſures up thoſe choice and uſeful Truths committed to its Truſt.

Truſt. Now, true Goodneſs is of ſuch a Nature, as that it purifies and refines theſe Faculties of the Mind; which, on the contrary, are infinitely weakned and diſordered by Senſuality and immoderate Deſires after the Bodily Life. There is nothing caſts ſo fatal a Damp upon the choiceſt Powers of the Soul, as a deep Immerſion in ſenſual Pleaſures. So that though in this Life *we ſee but in a Glaſs* (as the Apoſtle phraſes it) and that *darkly*, yet ſuch is our Infelicity that the groſs Streams and Suffuſions that ariſe by the enormous agitation of the Corporeal Life, ſo ſully and beſmear the Glaſs of our Underſtandings, that the pure Image of the Divinity, and the bright face of Truth cannot ſincerely be ſeen and diſcerned in it. And hence it is clear and evident, that the Mind is never ſo

healthful and ſprightly, as when it is carried in a ſteady and even courſe of Vertue.

Let us now conſider the Bleſſings of the Body, which are *Health and Freedom from Pain.* And what tends more to the Advancement of theſe than Temperance, Chaſtity and Sobriety? For the Mind being throughly purged and freed from the preſſure of earthly Vices and extravagant Luſts, derives a healing Influence even upon the Body it ſelf, and adds a Briskneſs and Vivacity to our Terreſtrial Frame. But when the Soul is ſower'd with Hatred, pined with Envy, and daily fretted with thoſe corroding Cares a Covetous Humour infects it withal, the Body participates of the Infirmities of the Mind, and often betrays its own ill Conſtitution by a Meagre Look, and a pale and dejected

jected Countenance. Is not the voluptuous Person frequently prest ſed into the Grave by an unequal Load of Meats and Drinks? And does not the laſcivious Man groan under the Miſeries contracted from a Luſtful Bed? Nay, many times the innocent Poſterity rue the Faults and Sins of their Anceſtors, and the Rottenneſs and Diſeaſes of the Parents, procured by their inſatiable and ungovernable Appetites are equally tranſmitted together with their Inheritances to their Children.

Only Vertue that's kind and beneficial to us, by forbiding us all thoſe things which would deſtroy our Natures; And if we would hearken to its gentle Whiſpers, it not only ſhows us, how by a natural efficacy it would preſerve our Health, and free us from Pain, by accuſtoming us to

a diſcreet Moderation of our ſenſual Paſſions and Deſires, but it beſtows a benign Pulchritude and Serenity that is eaſily diſcerned in the external Viſage and Countenance. And perhaps *Solomon* might allude to ſome ſuch thing as this, when he tells us that *Wiſdom makes the face to ſhine*, intimating, That the Practice of Holineſs and Vertue fills the Soul with ſuch a chearful Light and Vigour as diffuſes thoſe lovely Beams which become viſible in the very Face. As the Emperour *Antoninus* obſerved, *That a good, ſingle-hearted and benign Perſon diſcovers theſe beautiful Qualifications in his Eyes, neither is it poſſible for him to hide them.*

Eccleſ. 8. 1

Thus much for the Advantages which accrue to the Body from Religion: The Bleſſings which belong joyntly both to the Soul and Body are,

1. A

1. A good Name and Reputation. There is in the Mind of Man a natural Deſire of perpetuating his Name and Memory; and in all his Actions of Moment he makes to himſelf little Emblems and faint Repreſentations of Immortality. From hence ſprings the Care of Poſterity, and here lies the Ground of thoſe coſtly Monuments erected by the Ancients, *viz.* That they might Immortalize their Names. But theſe are poor and petty things, and the effects of a mean and abject Mind to place our Fame and Reputation in any of thoſe external Things which the injury of Time may obliterate and deface. A good Name and Reputation are only the Productions of true and ſincere Vertue, and by how much the more Noble and Expanſive this is, by ſo much the more glorious a Me-

Memory does it tranſmit of us to ſucceeding Generations. This alone will make the remembrance of us like a precious Oyntment, which will yield a pleaſant Fragrancy and Perfume, when we are gone into the other World.

2. A competency of Means and Eſtate. It is true, a flouriſhing Condition is not always the Lot of the beſt Chriſtian, but rather conſidering the reſtleſs endeavours of Vice to promote it ſelf, we muſt expect through many Tribulations to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And if the ſincerly Religious Perſon do not flow with Earthly abundance, yet he is better ſatisfied to die Poor, than to become Rich by the Spoils of Widows and Orphans, by the Arts and Intrigues of Fraud, Deceit, and Circumvention of others, which are the uſual Methods of grow-

growing Rich in the World. However, it remains equally firm that the Good, Honeſt, Frugal and Diligent Perſon is in the ſureſt way to proſper; and that he that purſues nothing as his ultimate end, but the true Love of GOD and Vertue, is inviſibly made ſucceſsful in his outward Circumſtances, by a favourable and kind Providence.

By this Deduction of Particulars it is evident how much Religion contributes to our Happineſs in this Life; And from what has been ſaid, we ſee the great Worth and Excellency of true Chriſtianity, whoſe ſalutary Influences and effects we experience both in this Life and the other. As for Vice, it is of ſuch a pitiful and crazy Nature, that it cannot ſtand upon its own Legs, but is forced to uſe the ſhadow and countenance of Ver-

Vertue for its ſupport. No Man dares to own or make a Profeſſion of Vice for it ſelf, but evermore covers it with ſome Sanctimonious Colour and Diſguiſe. Judge then, what Worth or Value can there be in that which is not able to uphold it ſelf, but is betrayed by its very Weakneſs? Let not then our ungovernable Appetites deprive us of that Happineſs which is entailed upon a Vertuous Life. This will ſtand by us and ſupport us in all Eſtates. 'Tis the Grace and Glory of our Youth to be found Vertuous and Good, and 'twill be the comfort of our old Age, when we have paſſed our days, and need no Repentance. Vertue makes the beſt Proviſion for the Happineſs of Man in this Life: For if we would enjoy a long and proſperous Life here, there is no ſurer way to it than through the Paths

of

of Holineſs; *length of Days are in her Right-hand, and in her Left-hand Riches and Honour.* Would we tranſact our Lives in Tranquility and Pleaſure? There is no Peace ſo laſting, no Pleaſure ſo pure, as that which ſprings from an honeſt Heart, The ways of Religion *are ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace.*

Indeed, if we are only in Love with ſenſual Pleaſures, and make it our whole buſineſs to purſue the ſatisfaction of Brutes, we can never attain to any grateful and affecting reliſh of Holineſs. Becauſe Vertue is a thing that cannot be ſeen with Corporeal Eyes, nor can the true diſcriminating ſence of it be diſcerned by the outward Taſte. But there is an inward ſence which is only awakened by the conſtant and ſerious Acts of Religion, that gives a true repre-

repreſentation of Vertue, and affects the Mind with the ſolid Pleaſures of Religion. Holineſs is of a permanent and ſtable Nature, whoſe comfortable influence is moſt diſcernible in the worſt ſtate of things, and never leaves nor forſakes a Man in the Agonies of Death it ſelf. But alas, what are all bodily Delights with which the Lives of Men are ſo much taken up? How frail and evanid! How fleeting and uncertain! And how void of all true Satisfaction and Content! What remains then, but that we ſeriouſly put in practice all the Acts of unfeigned Piety and Religion? Which if we have any Care of our beſt Intereſt we are ſtrictly obliged to. For whether we conſider Chriſtianity as to its uſefulneſs to the next Life, or its Serviceableneſs to this, in both theſe Caſes the Profit and Advantage

vantage of it evidently appears.

And now having finiſhed what I have to ſay upon this Text, I ſhall conclude with this, That Chriſtianity is ſo fram'd in all its Parts, that no Man has any the leaſt ſhadow of Reaſon to be aſhamed of it.

Bleſſed Lord, who haſt cauſed all Holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning; Grant that we may in ſuch wiſe hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digeſt them, that by Patience and Comfort of thy Holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold faſt the bleſſed Hope of everlaſting Life, which thou haſt given us in our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. Amen.

FINIS.